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ABSTRACT

A study followed up 27 disadvantaged adult students (13 by interviews and student and tutor questionnaires, 12 by tutor questionnaires, and 2 by student and tutor questionnaires) who were identified as "ready to move on" from their adult basic education (ABE) program at Hackney Adult Education Institute and Hackney Reading Centre (England). Biographies were developed for each of the 27 students, and patterns of progression were identified. These patterns included employment and vocational use of ABE, use of leisure classes to obtain needed skills and resources, and dropping in and out of ABE classes. Few students followed the traditional pattern in which educational qualifications result in enhanced employment opportunities. Factors that made progress possible included the following: (1) the built-in flexibility of ABE to respond to student needs; (2) the provision of advice and guidance; (3) students' age (younger students had greater educational choices); and (4) definitions of student success. Recommendations include increased student financial support, creation of modular courses, outreach by colleges, study skills support, child care, and access for disabled students. (The student and tutor questionnaires are included in the report.) (KC)

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AGE OF OPPORTUNITY ?

Progression routes and outcomes for students in Adult Basic Education from Hackney Adult Education Institute and Hackney Reading Centre

Joanne Temple

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The North & East London Open College Network

ALFA (Access to learning for Adults) is the North & East London Open College Network which links education providers and organisations in Hackney, Islington, Tower Hamlets and the City of London in collaborative work to extend and improve access to education opportunites for adults who have traditionally been under-represented in the system. ALFA's work to-date has been in four main areas:

information on education opportunities for adults
a wide staff development programme
a range of research and development projects
an accreditation system for all adult learning

ALFA has produced a number of development project reports concerning access in its widest sense and Access to Higher Education issues, of which this is the latest one. ALFA has also recently been awarded Validating Agency status by the CNAA/CVCP under the national arrangements for validation of Access to Higher Education courses.

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Joanne Temple

The Age of Opportunity ?
Progression routes and outcomes
for students in Adult Basic Education
from Hackney Adult Education Institute

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Acknowledgements

I would like to thank

Julia Clarke whose findings in her project *'This is a Lifetime thing'* formed the basis of this research,

the Project Steering Group, Rita Ellman, Nora Hughes, Irene Schwaab,and Chris Taylor, who were constructive and unstinting with their ideas and support,

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Rita Ellman, the ALFA Project Co-ordinator for her editorial assistance aided by Irene Schwaab and Nora Hughes in the laters stages,

the tutors and organisers who helped me to meet students, fill in questionnaires and gave me their time with enthusiasm

and special thanks to all the students on whom this work is based and who were so generous with their time and energy.

Summary

This research follows up 27 students who intended to enrol on further or higher education courses, or who were identified as 'ready to move on' by their adult basic education tutors.

The intention was to trace out the patterns of their progression into employment or college courses and to further identify the factors which made this progression possible, and those which hindered progression.

It was found that few followed the pattern traditionally associated with success in education, which assumes that the gaining of educational qualifications will result in enhanced employment opportunities or in the further pursuit of education. In some cases this was so, but others followed more complex routes.

Adults use the education provision in various ways, moving in and out of courses as they are able according to their home and employment circumstances. They also often come back to seek help from basic education tutors when they need further reading and writing or numeracy skills for work or further or higher education. The built-in flexibility of adult basic education provision to respond to those needs is an important factor in their success.

Another important factor for adults is the provision of continuing support for learning throughout the system; support for study skills as well as educational advice and counselling is a necessary component of adult education.

Classes which are considered to be leisure classes are often used for work-related purposes by adults. This can range from learning skills to set up a small business, such as dress-making, or learning a language for use at work.

In the past, in London, fairly liberal provision has meant that adult education has become an important part of the lives of many Londoners. For those who have not benefitted, for one reason or another, from formal schooling, this has meant that the possibility of studying throughout adult life has become a reality. New initiatives such as modularisation of courses and accreditation of learning means that we now have a system that can ensure that all this learning can be seen to be of use, that time spent in classes does not go to waste because it does not lead to a traditionally recognised qualification. As always the question of resources is felt behind all these advances but if adult basic education as well as other adult education provision is not protected the long-term social and economic consequences for London will be grave.

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Background to Research

This research arose out of a seminar organised by ALFA on the report *This is a Lifetime Thing*, by Julia Clarke in 1989. Participants of the seminar agreed that the research had been of great importance but that it needed to be continued to be of effect in evaluating and improving progression routes.

A proposal was subsequently drawn up and presented to ALFA who agreed to fund the follow-up research. Part of the concern was that the abolition of the ILEA and the establishment of education authorities in the individual London boroughs in April 1990 would cause the system to change in various ways. Some boroughs, including Hackney intend to set up Community Colleges. There is optimism amongst practitioners of basic education that this is an opportunity to benefit from changing structures to set up systems that are right for students' needs.

Students in basic education need a structure with which they themselves identify and the Community College needs to respond to the breadth of these legitimate needs for education and personal development in its fullest sense.

The proposal was:

1. To follow up all the students located by Julia Clarke's research in Hackney AEI and Hackney Reading Centre who were intending to enrol on FE or HE college courses.

2. The research would provide insights into current progression routes for Basic Education students and identify:

1) what have been some of the barriers to access
11) what has enabled successful progression to take place.

It became necessary to examine the notion of success in terms of job aspirations, personal goals and progression through the educational system.

In the course of the research a complex pattern of student movement emerged (some of which was evident in Julia Clarke's report).

Students do not necessarily progress in linear fashion from one point on an educational continuum to another. They drop in and out of literacy classes as their circumstances change and according to changes in their employment situation. They pick and choose from a variety of courses on offer and select for themselves an education, often over many years, and set their own goals.. These can be as varied as going on to a university degree or setting up a hairdressing business.

Students also return to literacy and numeracy classes as support for their work on FE and HE courses.

Learning for its own sake is also a goal and students will often return to literacy classes to take advantage of working with known and trusted tutors and will progress at their own pace.
Many students use leisure classes to gain skills needed for work as well as personal development. The distinction between education and training which is now being imposed on adult education often does not fit either the needs or the perceptions of the students who do not make the same kind of distinction.
Adults also turn to Adult Basic Education to fill in the gaps left by inadequate schooling. Many gain the basic levels of literacy and numeracy needed to make them employable and they use ABE to improve their standards and so progress to higher levels at work.
Many adult students particularly those from ethnic minorities, in boroughs like Hackney see education as their only real hope of establishing themselves in this society.
Adult education in London as a whole has offered a varied and flexible service and has developed over 100 years according to local needs. Its growth and development is in danger unless the importance of its place in the lives of its many users is acknowledged and protected.

The Researcher

I obtained my Certificate in Education in 1969 and taught full-time for three years in primary schools. In 1973 I took a year off and became involved, as a volunteer, in setting up and teaching on an Adult Literacy Scheme in a local Womens' Centre in Islington. The scheme was funded by what was then the Adult Literacy Resource Agency. I obtained my BEd Honours degree in 1978. My thesis was a comparison and contrast of different approaches and methods of learning to read and write with adult literacy students.

I have since worked part-time in primary schools with children who have special educational needs. I have extensive experience of working in literacy classes with adults in Islington and Hackney Adult Education Institutes and at Hackney Reading Centre. I also taught literacy at Holloway Prison and have worked with Travellers off site. Recently I worked at Hackney Hospital with students in a psychiatric unit.

I have lived in Hackney for ten years. Since 1982 I have established and developed a substantial volunteer training programme in Hackney Adult Education Institute. I have had responsibility for the recruitment, selection, training , placement and support of volunteers in Adult Literacy and Numeracy classes and in 1:1 home tuition. With my colleagues I have been responsible for writing a training package which has been used as a model for other training programmes. I also teach Study Skills on a Fresh Start course.

Student- centred learning and a negotiated curriculum is part of good practice in Adult Basic Education. Similarly, child-centred learning is, I believe, the best approach to working with children, in order to develop their self-esteem. The overlap and differences between working with children and working with adults has always interested me and my thinking and practice has changed accordingly over the years.

Joanne Temple
January 1991

Background Information

The Borough of Hackney was identified by the Department of the Environment as the most "deprived" local authority area in England and Wales,using data from the 1981 census. The area has a particularly high unemployment rate, 31.6% overall and as high as 90% for young black people living on certain housing estates. Black people clearly face obstacles in the job market but many, as this research shows, use adult education to further their own ambitions and aspirations in various ways.

The Students

A majority of the basic education students in Hackney are unemployed. The students range in age from 14 to 80. Although Adult Education begins at 16 years, occasionally young people are brought by their parents to classes to obtain extra help with school work. Approximately 75% of the students are Afro-Caribbean and some students are from other ethnic minorities.

Adult Basic Education (ABE)

Adult Basic Education is a development of the Adult Literacy provision of the 1970's. It now includes numeracy and post-literacy classes such as Reading and Writing with Confidence and Fresh Start, which is a pre-access course. Also included are vocational or creative classes such as computing/word processing and photography which offer literacy and numeracy support along with the skills required to partake in the class. It is important to acknowledge that the student- centred style of teaching, adapted by practitioners in teaching literacy ,is also appropriate to students who have basic skills and are considering preparing for further education.

As Julia Clarke has pointed out in *This is a Lifetime Thing*, ABE provision can be based in Adult Education Institutes, Further Education Colleges and Voluntary Schemes as well as in Open Learning Centres or Employment Training Schemes.

Hackney Adult Education Institute (HAEI)

Hackney AEI has a programme of classes in branches and in community centres all over Hackney, in the broad areas of Access. These are classes geared to the vocational or educational needs of students, and include Art, English for Speakers of Other Languages, Literacy, Numeracy, Physical Education and Textiles. The AEI and its predecessors have offered literacy and numeracy classes for about14 years. There are approximately 70 of these classes per week on 12 sites with creche provision for many day time classes More recently, the provision has included courses such as Fresh Start for Women, Maths for Study and Reading and Writing with Confidence, which aim to serve as a next step for basic education students as well as a point of entry for adults returning to education after a long break. Most of the classes are taught by part-time tutors. Volunteer

tutors work in some classes and also help to provide 1:1 home tuition for housebound students.

Hackney Reading Centre (HRC)*

The Hackney Reading Centre is a basic education project situated within Centerprise, a community centre which also houses a coffee bar, bookshop, publishing project, advice centre and other services. The Reading Centre was previously funded through City & East London College and is now funded through Hackney College. One of the full-time workers at the Reading Centre also teaches at Hackney College. There are six part-time tutors and volunteers assist in all classes. There are 14 literacy and numeracy classes per week., The Reading Centre runs a 4 week summer scheme after the end of the college and AEI terms in July as well as occasional subject based short courses. It has developed a course(College Links for Adults) specifically to assist adults progressing from basic education to courses in further or higher education.

*Information taken from *'This is a Lifetime Thing'* published in June, 1989 by ALFA

College Links Course at Hackney Reading Centre

Almost all of the students I interviewed at the Reading Centre had completed the College Links for Adults course and so it is appropriate to give details of its background and context and to discuss it as a group experience. The course also highlights how the support structure offered in adult basic education classes such as Hackney Reading Centre can affect the progression routes that students make..The students were all encouraged to attend the College Links Course by their tutor at Hackney Reading Centre. Many of them had been attending classes for some years They were given appropriate publicity at the Reading Centre for the sort of classes they were to attend at college and prepared for the work ahead.

Background and Context in which course developed.*

When this course first began **City and East London College was a Further Education College, based mainly on five sites: Pitfield Street (Hackney), Bunhill Row and Willen House (Islington), and Jubilee Street and Raines Building (in Tower Hamlets), with other smaller sites in the East London area, including the Hackney Reading Centre. Hackney Reading Centre had been attached to the Jubilee Street site of the college for many years. Close links were maintained, both through cross-referral of students and by the fact that some members of staff taught on adult courses at both sites. These links meant that over the years there was a natural inclination for Reading Centre students to progress on to adult courses at Jubilee Street: for example, Wider Opportunities for Adults, and the Adult Foundation Course. The main progression route for students from the Reading Centre had been to the Adult Foundation Course. This course had been running at the Jubilee Street site for 5 years.It attracted a range of students from advanced literacy level through to GCSE level. On the whole, students with fewer literacy skills would have been referred to the Reading Centre. However, even with close co-operation between Hackney Reading Centre and college, students had always found progression on to college difficult. It was an awareness of this need for progression with continued support which led Reading Centre workers to consider a new course, the College Links for Adults, to be run jointly by Hackney Reading Centre and City and East London
College. The aim of the course was to prepare Adult Basic Education students for full-time or 21 hour college courses or other forms of continuing education and offer support. The students considered for the College Links for Adults Course were advanced literacy students, i.e. students who were able to work reasonably independently; they would be able to read a newspaper article and understand the gist of it; they would be able to sustain a piece of writing for, perhaps, a page and have some self-checking skills; they would be able to use a simple dictionary and fill in a straightforward form, but would lack the confidence to apply these skills to more complex reading and writing tasks.

*This section is taken directly from 'College Links for Adults' and Adult Foundation Course. Hackney Reading Centre. Jean Milloy & Irene Schwab pub. ILEA Education for Unemployed Adults Project

** Since the abolition of the ILEA the Jubilee Street site and Raines Building have been integrated into the new Tower Hamlets College of Further Education.

Methodology

I received from Julia Clarke who had written This is a Lifetime Thing , *a list of 40 students of whom tutors had identified 15 as* having progressed to college in 1988. The other 25 were identified by tutors as being ready to move on.

From these sparse beginnings I began to track down the students in order to interview them where possible. I did not see it as necessary to find out about students' educational backgrounds. This had already been accomplished as part of *This is a Lifetime Thing.* They were also already established in basic education in Hackney Adult Education Institute and Hackney Reading Centre as well as having completed courses of further education. This piece of work then was to find out what happened to those students. .

I asked various tutors who had taken part in Julia Clarke's research in Hackney AEI and the organiser at Hackney Reading Centre to identify those students with whom they had worked.

The 15 Reading Centre students were easily identifiable and their addresses were readily available. I was introduced to nine students by the organiser and they were prepared for my arrival when a visit was arranged Those students whom I could not visit in a class, I telephoned and arranged an alternative visit. Of the other six students I was not able to see, one was unwell and not attending classes and it was impossible for organisational reasons to visit the last five students.

There was one last student, Rose, identified as ready to move on,who refused to be interviewed She did not come to the pre-arranged meeting in her class. The recent years had been painful in terms of employment, and talking about herself with regard to education and work may have been disturbing for her. Rose did not identify herself as "Ready to Move On".

Tracing the 25 students who had attended literacy or numeracy classes in the Institute was far more difficult. 12 students were impossible to trace because they had attended classes for very short periods of time or attended irregularly. 10 of these 12 students were identified as having progressed to further education courses by Julia Clarke. They were, for the most part, courses at Hackney College. The implications of this is that they were highly self- motivated and did not feel the need for the support that adult basic education offered and they successfully completed their courses. 8 other students were found through old registers and tutors' personal records of addresses of whom five were traced directly to Hackney College.

I sent out the 8 questionnaires to the students concerned from HAEI. I was able to interview 4 students. Two others returned their questionnaires but were unwilling to be interviewed and two did not return their questionnaires and so, again, I was dependent on the tutors' information for their progress. I relied on information from tutors on the last 5 students. Four of these students had left their Institute classes since 1988 and tutors had maintained short-term links with them. The final student, with whom the tutor had developed a friendship had moved.

I had then, information on 27 students, 13 by interview, student and tutor questionnaires, 12 by tutor questionnaires and two by student and tutor questionnaires.

Biographies

This section focuses on the paths followed by individual students in this report. Their routes are traced through the educational system and the job market. Students moved into and out of institutions of adult and further education as and when they required support for work situations or for further study. They seldom moved in a straight line through the educational provision,. The graphics are designed to illustrate the biographies and to illuminate more clearly the complex nature of some of the routes. The biographies are then analysed in the section on Patterns of Progression.

The symbols represent:

Adult Basic Education

Further Education

Higher Education

Vocational Courses

Non-vocational Courses

Employment

Unemployment

Drop-out

— — — — — a route not taken up

Some specific routes for individual students where appropriate

Student statistics: **Ethnicity:**

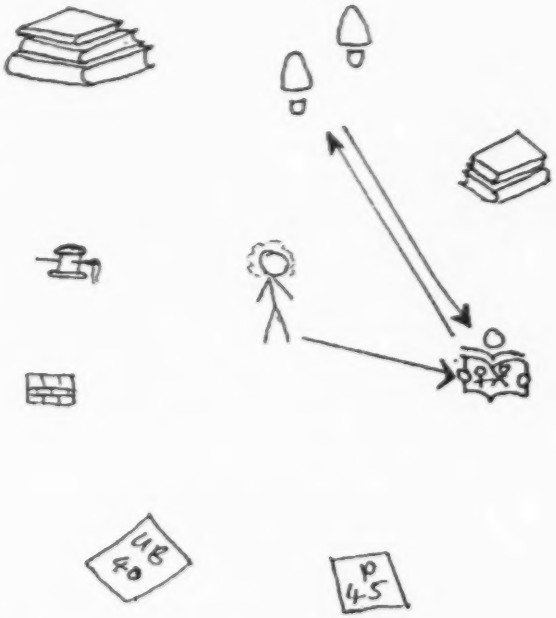
There were 17 students of Afro-Caribbean origin, 6 students of African origin, 3 white British students and 1 Portuguese student

Gender:

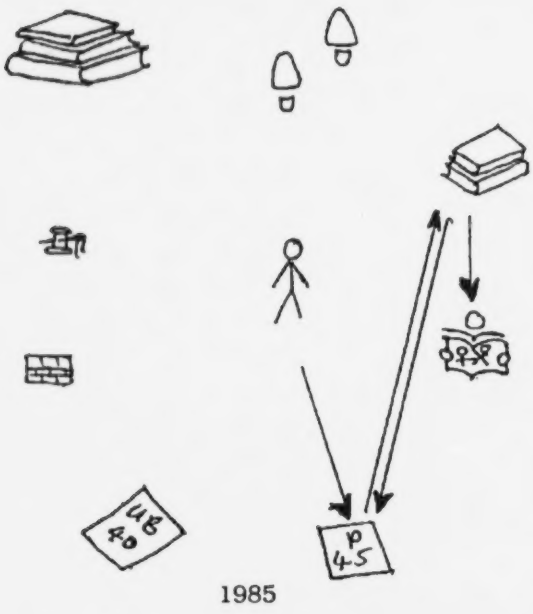
23 women and 4 men.

Age:

15 students 20-30 yrs; 6 students 30-40 yrs; 0 students 40-50 yrs; 4 students 50 -60 yrs; 2 students 60+ yrs.



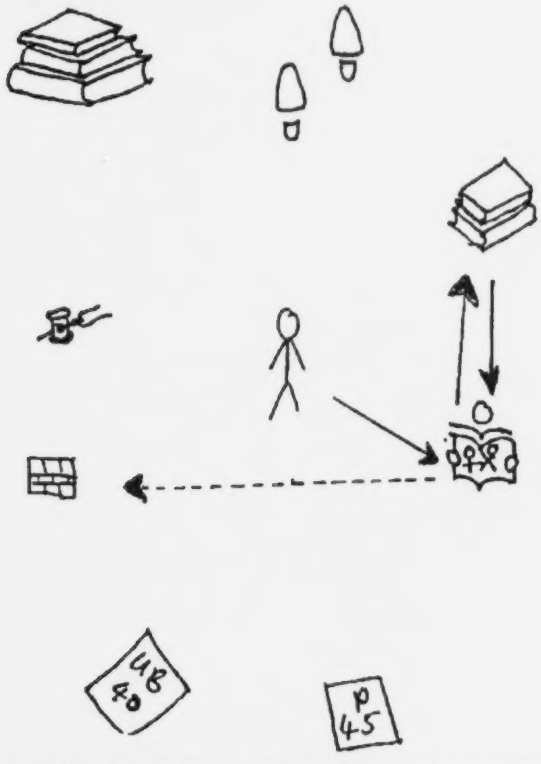
Agnes. Attended literacy classes irregularly at HAEI since 1986. She is a professional hairdresser wishing to increase her study skills and build up confidence. Since our interview has attended classes again in HAEI. Ambition - to run her own hairdressing business.



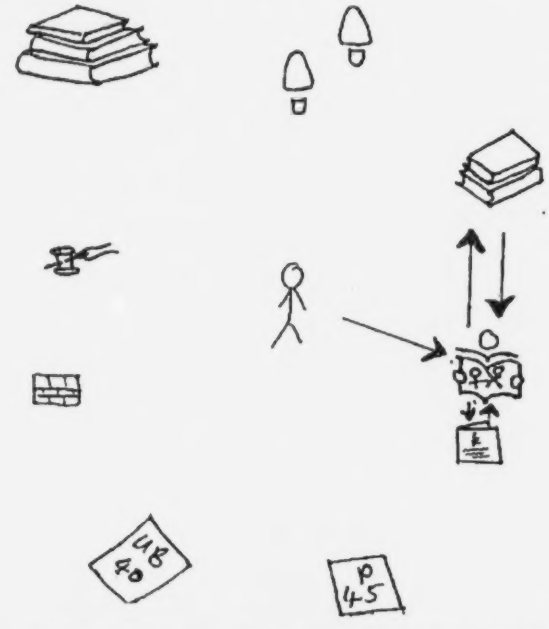
1985

1981

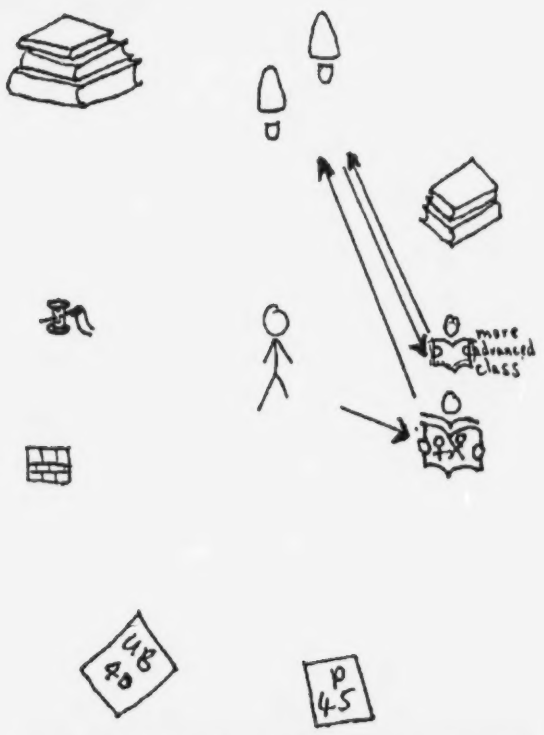
Amina. A single parent with 2 children. Attended Bethnal Green Institute for literacy classes in 1979, when she was a community worker in Tower Hamlets. She completed a study skills course at Hackney college in 1981. She was a volunteer in a Community Centre which led to a P/T job with Somali people. She then had another job with the MSC as an interpreter. She needed to write reports and in 1985, went to HRC to support these needs. Ambition - would like to repeat study skills course and do CQSW with Age Concern, possibly Sept.1991.



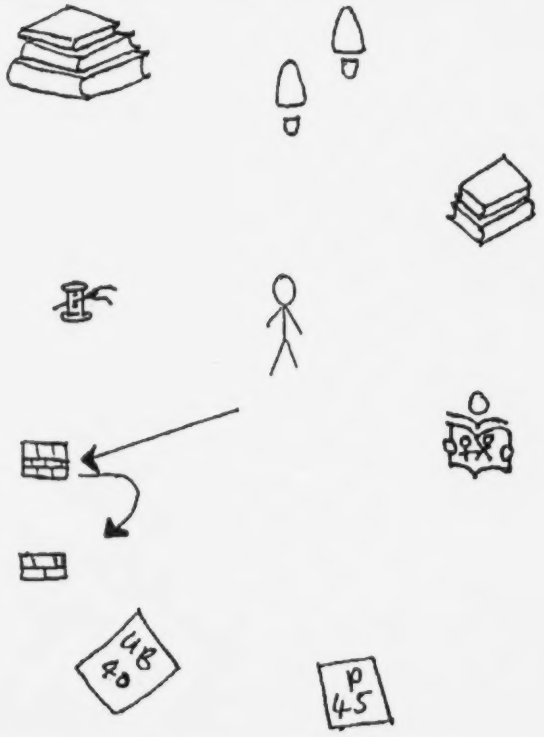
Angela. Attends HRC. Completed College Links course and Adult Foundation Course at City and East London College 1988-1989. Attends Moving On class at HRC. Applied to Clothing Technology course at HAEI but was unsuccessful due to administrative problems. Will apply again.



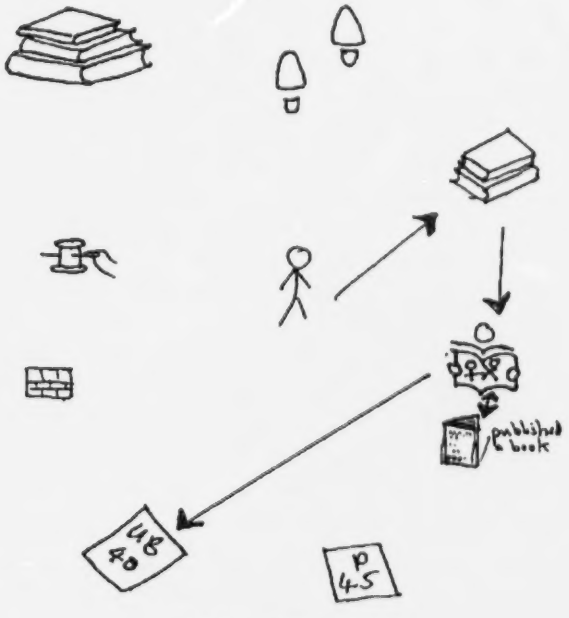
Beverley. She successfully completed the College Links course in 1988 and wanted to progress to either an office skills course or a hairdressing course. She passed the Maths but not the English entrance tests for the hairdressing. She went to a private language school as an ESOL student but cannot afford to continue. She has returned to the Reading Centre and is going to repeat College Links 1990 course. Ambition: Would like an office job but feels her English will not be strong enough. Decided to pursue hairdressing as she is experienced in this.

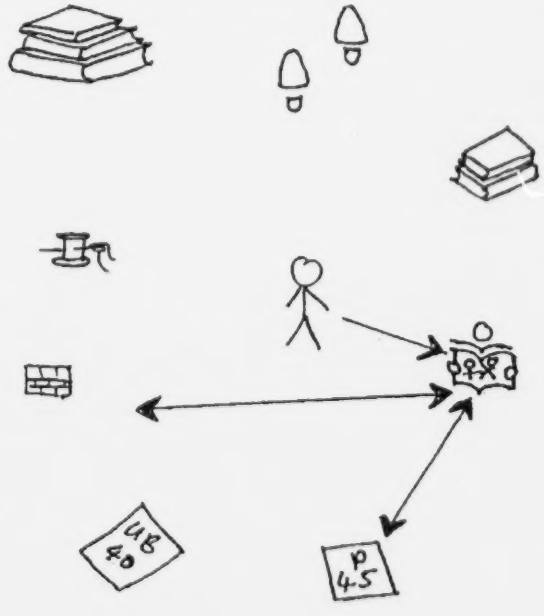


Brigid. Attended reading and writing classes in HAEI. Wanted to do GCSE at Hackney College, but there was no space in the creche for her child. Left her ABE class. Began Reading and Writing with Confidence in Sept. 1989. Left this. She is a childminder and wants to do a more advanced childcare course.

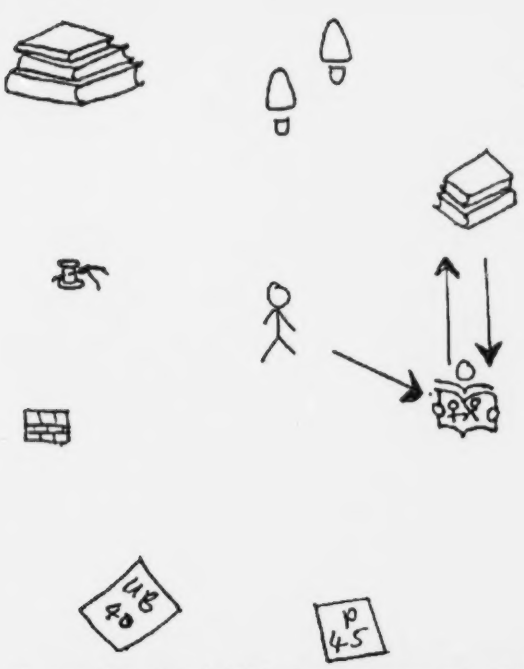


Buchi. Attended a dressmaking class at HAEI. Progressed to Access to Clothing Technology course at HAEI. Ambition - to become self-employed.

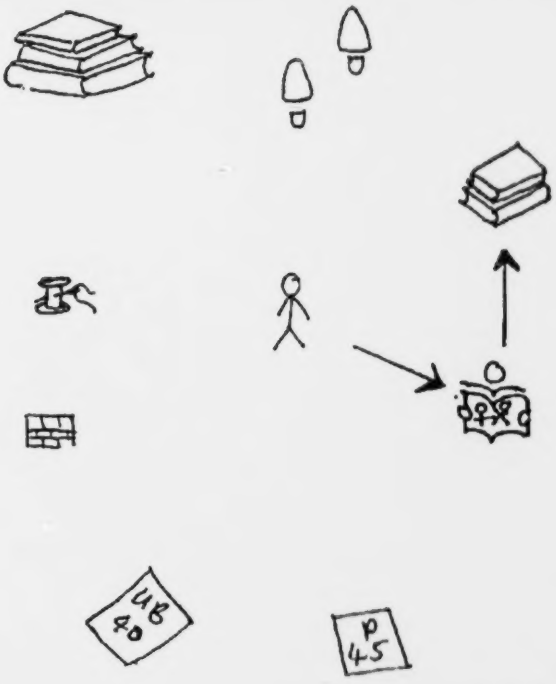




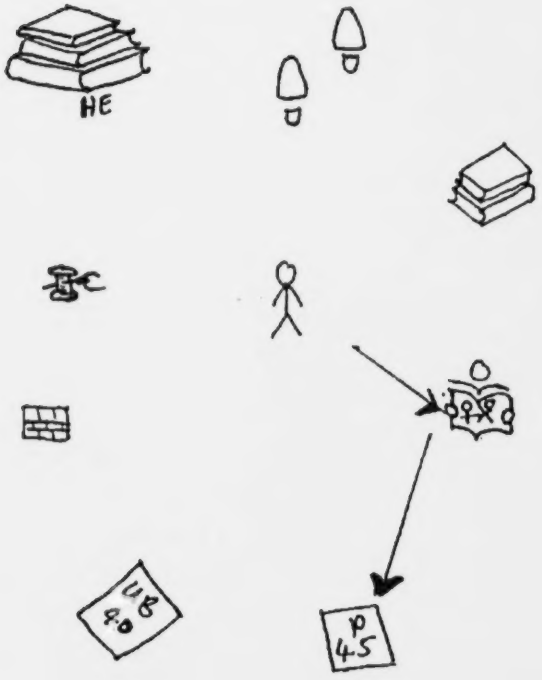
Charlene. Completed a TOPS preparatory course at City and East London College in 1981. Had a child who is Autistic. Went to HRC. Was unable to find a job of own choice. Published a book about her life with her son. Completed 1 yr. office skills course at Project Fullemploy. Had temporary work in catering and shop work. Attends classes at HRC once a week. Ambition - wants a full time office job.



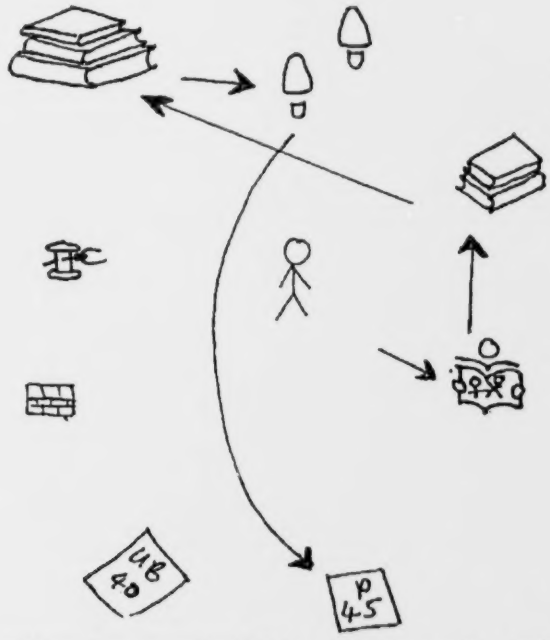
Cherise. Has attended HRC for some years. Completed College Links and Adult Foundation course at City and East London College. Attends Moving On and other classes at HRC most days. Ambition - would like to cook for home, family and friends.



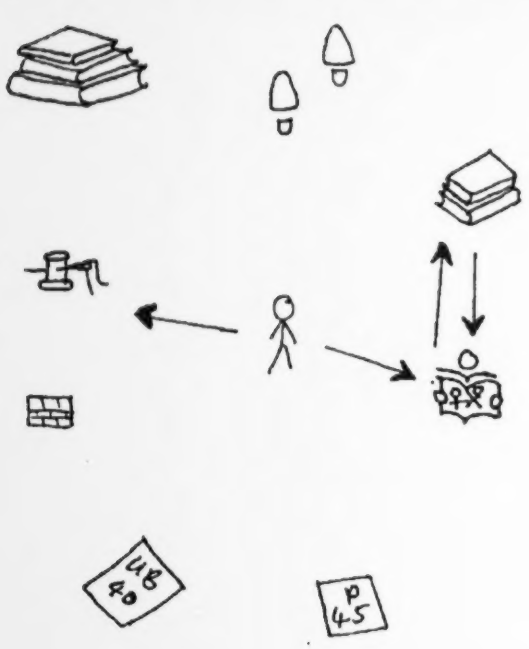
Dawn. Completed College Links in 1988. She is a pensioner and is not seeking employment. She is not currently attending the Reading Centre.



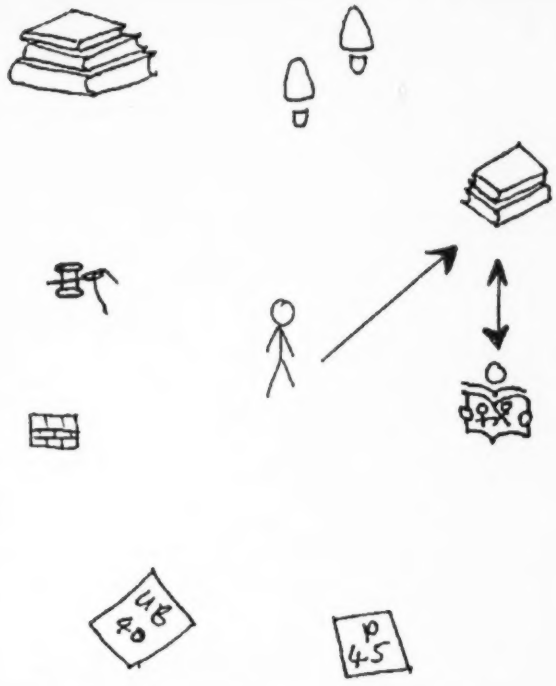
Dave. Attended literacy classes in HAEI. Worked as a cleaner for Hackney Council. Was promoted as a trainer in the Cleansing Dept. in Hackney Council. Left ABE.



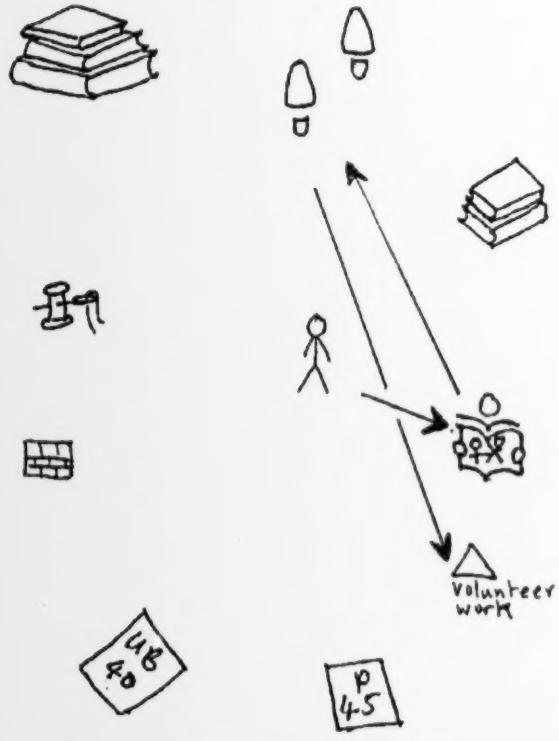
Debbie. First attended HRC in 1983 for reading and writing. Progressed to HAEI Fresh start for Women course in Hackney AEI 1984. Successfully gained 'O' levels at Hackney College in 1985 and went on to an Access course at Hackney College 1986. Began a BA in Cultural Studies at North London Polytechnic in 1988. Dropped out at end of first year. Wants to gain some vocational skills and some experience. Has a temporary job as an administrative worker. Ambition - to finish her degree and gain more experience.



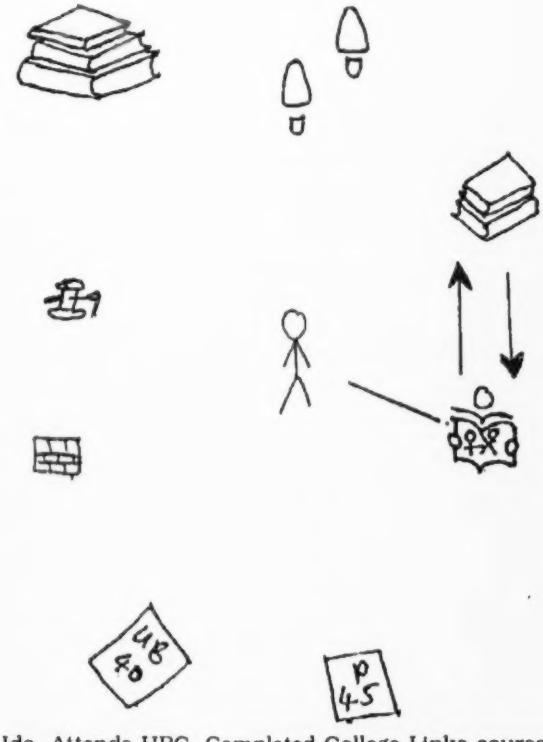
Dulcie. Has attended HRC since 1981 as well as a dressmaking class. Completed College Links course. Continues to attend HRC twice a week. Ambition - finds it difficult to say. "Attitude to life takes time."



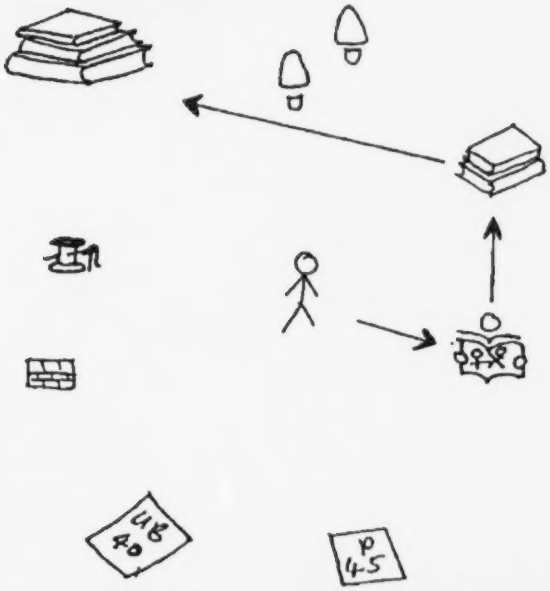
Hussein. Has obtained the equivalent of 'O' level Maths in Bangladesh but the qualification wasn't recognised in this country. Attended 'O'level maths course at Hackney College. Went to 'Slightly Harder Maths' at HAEI to support this. Left HAEI.



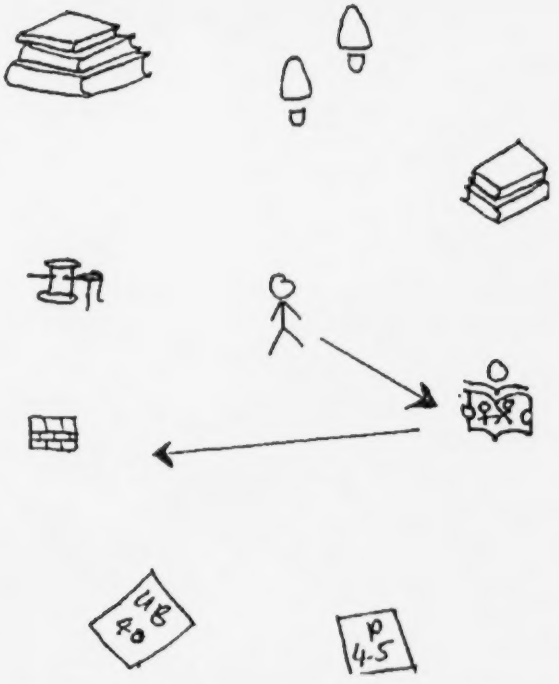
Elizabeth. Attended literacy classes at HAEI. Was active in her pensioners group and wanted to 'slow down,' so left ABE to devote her time and energy to this group.



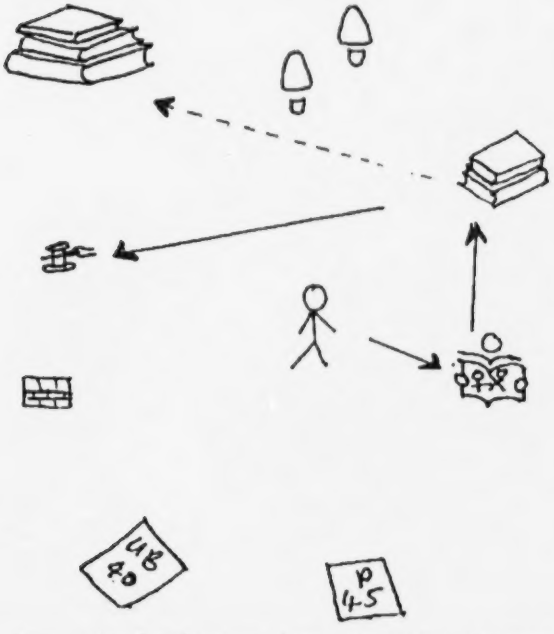
Ida. Attends HRC. Completed College Links course and Adult Foundation course which built up her confidence. Continues to attend HRC classes and Moving On class. Ambition - to teach English and Computer Studies.



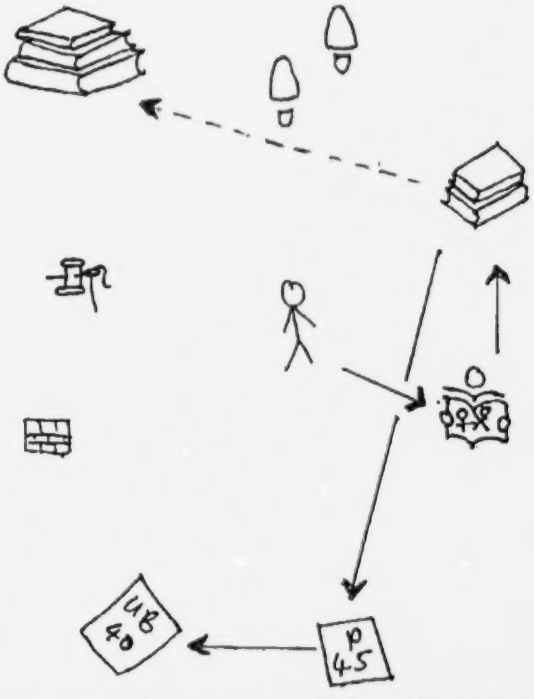
Isobel. Attended HAEI Study Skills class twice a week for one term. Moved on and completed Adult Foundation course at City and East London. Advanced to City Lit for a one yr. F/t course and thern to Goldsmiths for a three yr. degree course. She is now in her second year. She was educated in Portugal up to preparatory level for University and then suffered a serious car accident. After recovery she came to England and continued her studies. Ambition - to finish her degree and train to be an Art therapist or a counsellor with people of different cultures.



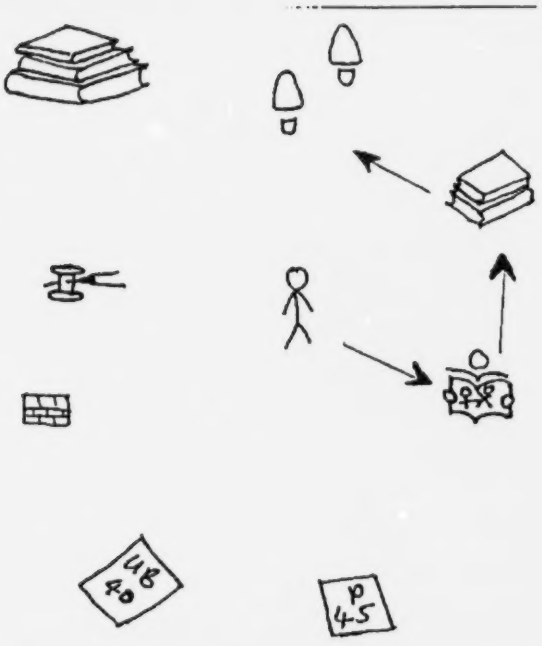
Janina. Attended numeracy classes once a week September - December 1988. Went to Hackney College Community Care course. Ambition - to get work.



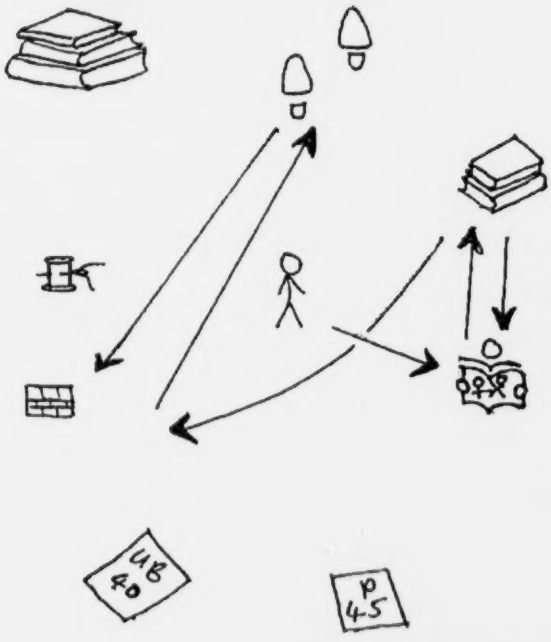
Jane. Attended literacy classes in HAEI. She was interesed in upholstery and completed a one year course in upholstery at Kingsway College. She was offered a place at the London College of Furniture but couldn't afford the fees. She now attends an upholstery class at HAEI. Ambition - hopes the upholstery skills will lead to self-emloymemt.



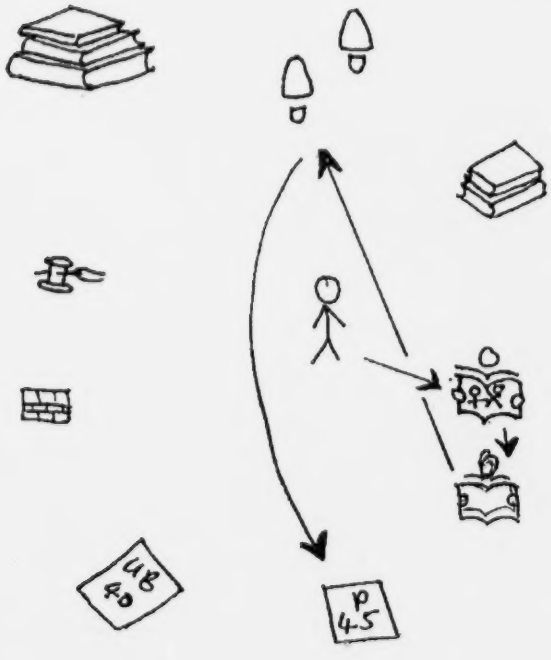
John. Attended maths class at Hackney AEI. Went to Hackney College in 1986 to take 'O' level English and Maths. Left AEI class. Offered a place at Ploytechnic of Wales but declined for finacncial reasons. He is now a house husband in Wales. Ambition - further study, particularly history.



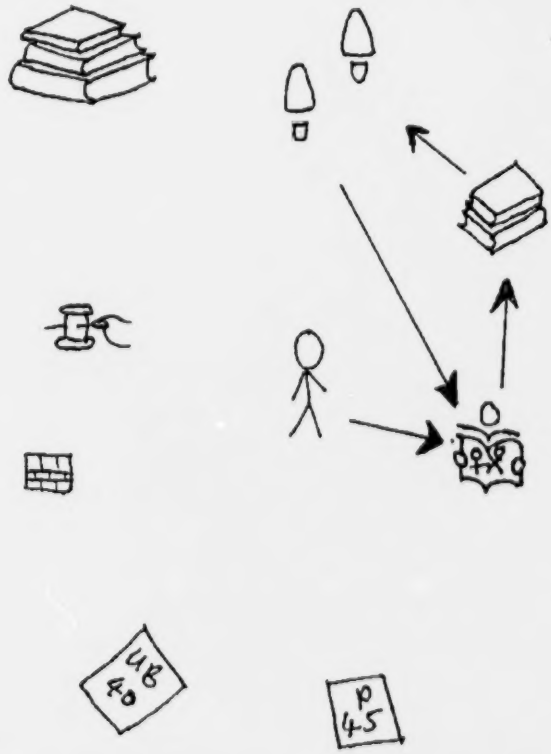
Mabel. Attended literacy and numeracy classes for 3 years in HAEI. Began a course in Catering Technology in Barking, had 1:1 support from tutor but pressure of course, time taken for tutorials and caring for her child led her to drop out. Also does not drop in to HAEI class any more.



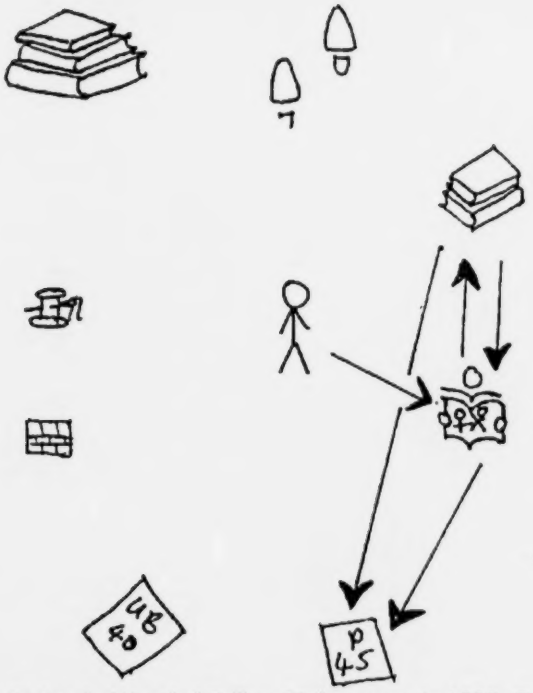
Marion. Has attended HRC for some years. Completed College Links course in 1988. Began a Pre School Playgroup course at HAEI but dropped out to go to the Caribbean for a month. Has to begin the PPA again in January, 1990. Continues to attend HRC classes. Ambition - to work with under 5's in a nursery.



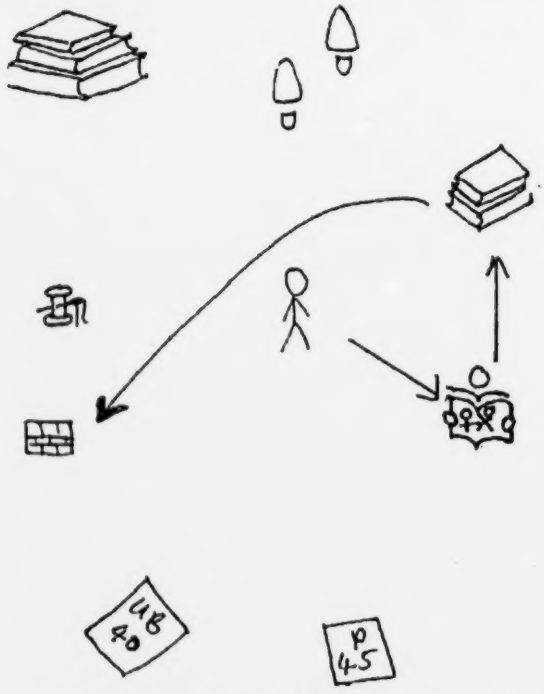
Margaret. Attended reading and writing class in HAEI. Went on to study skills class in HAEI. Dropped out when she had her third child. Will return to full time work with British Telecom after maternity leave. Ambition - wants post of greater responsibility with B.T.



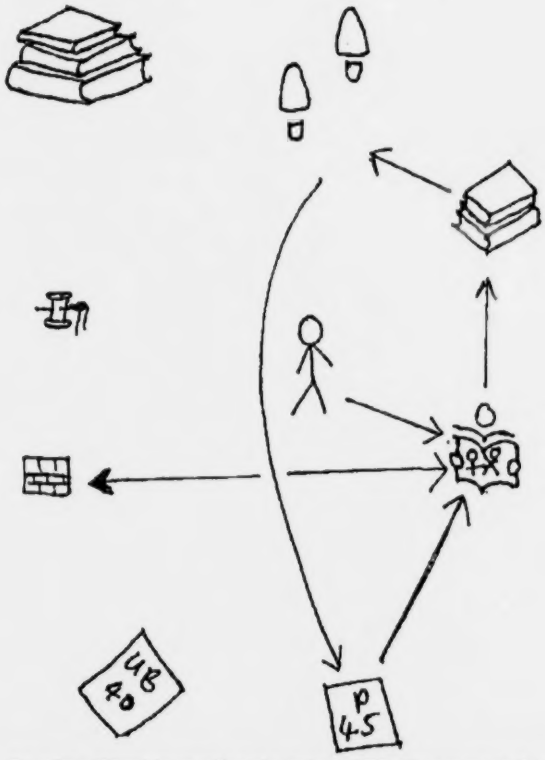
Pearl. Has attended HRC for some years. Dropped out of College Links Course. She continues to attend classes at HRC.



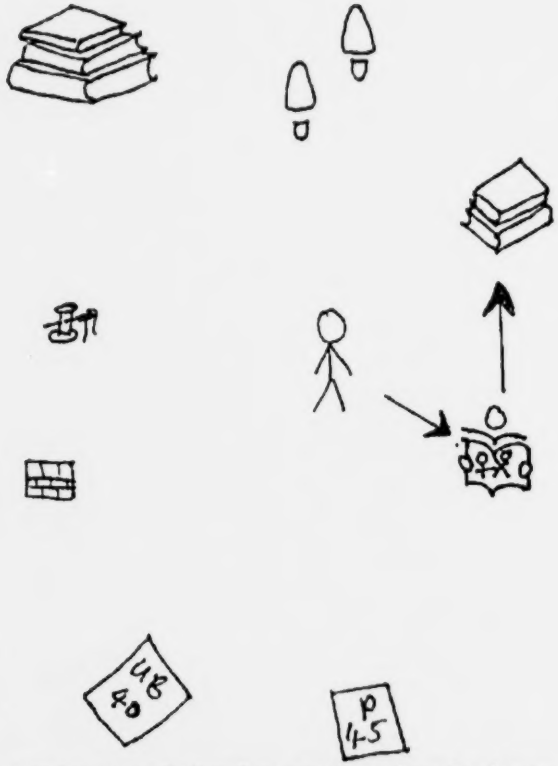
Richard. Attended College Links course in 1988. Got a job in Tesco.



Stephanie. Attended College Links course and progressed to Access to Social Work course at City and East London College.
Wants to progress to Polytechnic to do CQSW course.



Sandra. Went to maths class in HAEI. Encouraged to go to Return to Study. Course at HC. Dropped out after 5 weeks to do child care work with Community Industry. Returned to HAEI. At present attends maths, reading and writing and study skills classes. Also a Pre School Playgroup course. Ambition to repeat Return to Study course, then CQSW or NNEB.



Virgilia. Attended reading, writing and maths classes at HAEI. Enrolled at Hackney College Return to study course with Business studies option.

PATTERNS OF PROGRESSION

Patterns of progression can be seen from the ways in which students made use of the College Links Course, the Adult Foundation Courses, ABE and 'leisure ' classes to enhance their employment prospects and life skills. Students also used ABE as support for further or higher education courses.

The issues which became apparent from those patterns were those associated with parts of the curriculum, particularly maths, the need for continuing literacy support, the requirements of a particular job and the decision about whether to to continue or not in education.

Other issues arise from the nature of inner city life, where deprivation heightens the discrimination faced by people as a result of their class, race, gender, age or disability. These issues did not overtly arise in interviews because specific questions were not asked. Nevertheless, oblique references were made by students raising some of these issues, e.g. the crucial question of fees and grants directly affecting working class women was raised by Debbie and Jane. The majority of people in this research are women and the issue of child care clearly emerges with Agnes and Mabel, while the effect of age is brought up by Cheriese in relation to emlpoyment and further education.

The issue of special needs was raised in Dulcie's case because she could not have attended her course without particular arrangements being made for access. No one else raised this point. It was Cheriese's tutor who told me that Cheriese had poor eyesight and that worksheets with enlarged print were prepared for her on the College Links course.

Employment and Vocational Use of ABE

Almost all of the students researched went on to college courses from ABE or went directly into employment. There were some whose starting point was in ABE and who gained employment directly as a result of attending classes or who moved on to a course from a literacy class and then obtained a job.

Dave's time in a literacy class led directly to employment as a trainer in the Domestic Department of Hackney Council.

Richard was encouraged to go on the College Links course by the tutors at HRC. His tutor thought he found it enormously useful in terms of building concentration and confidence. Richard had been classified as having 'learning difficuties' and it was thought that he did not have great expectations of progress. His ambition was to get a full-time job and he had recently done so in Tesco's. His tutors informed me, "this is his first real job and he was extremely proud."

Other students progress as far as they feel able and can then make realistic decisions about their working lives. Some appear to achieve their ambitions.

Beverley successfully completed the College Links course and wanted to progress, either to an office skills course or a hairdressing course. Although she passed the maths entrance exam for the hairdressing course, she did not pass the English entrance test. She can do the work to get a job, (she had been working part-time as a hairdresser) but is not able yet to get the qualifications. She will reapply for Intensive Hairdressing this year.

There were some students who went on to vocational courses. Most of them were between 20 and 30 years old. This is not surprising as people of this age have their working lives ahead. However, although this sample of students shows it is mainly younger students going to vocational courses, the tutors I spoke to know that students of all ages, many working, attend vocational classes and are interested in learning for its own sake. There is personal motivation to improve skills and build confidence.

Stephanie had successfully completed the College Links course in 1988. Her tutor at HRC felt it built up her confidence and developed her skills. She wanted to be a social worker and so her tutor had assisted her to obtain a place on an Access to Social Work course at City and East London College. She was continuing with this and her tutor expects that she will go on to the Polytechnic to do the Certificate for the Qualification in Social Work.

Buchi first attended a clothes making class at the AEI. which has literacy and numeracy support. It is a good example of how students can progress quickly on courses with learning support built in from the beginning. The AEI

is expanding its programme of learning support for a diverse range of subjects e.g. massage and photography. Buchi's tutor, L. was sure that she was very clear about the purpose of her Access to Clothing Technology course. "During our discussions Buchi expressed the wish to do further study. I. recommended her to join Access to Clothing Technology course."

Like I. at HRC, this tutor also taught on the course that Buchi advanced to, and Buchi could feel supported by this. L. said that Buchi's ambitions were "to be self employed". She was between 20 and 30 years old and she developed a number of skills on the course to the extent that she felt she could earn a living from being self employed.

For some students the route is not straightforward, but with determination and patience, they make their way through the system to get what they need from it.

Sandra was 20 years old and had attended different literacy and numeracy classes at different times. She could take advantage of the flexibility of classes, times, places and types of AEI classes, progress to a structured college course, then move because it did not suit her and reselect her options. Sandra had attended a maths class once a week and did not find the enrolment procedure for a College course difficult. She stated that her tutor knew the tutor at College.
" She gave me the book...she gave me the confidence, the information and the phone number to go along to the preparatory term for the Return to Study course at Hackney College."
Sandra dropped out after about a month, however, because she wanted to have some child care experience and did this with Community Industry.
'The training was useful,..... the work experience was really good but it didn't help you get a job."
She had continued with literacy classes alongside her Community Industry training. She is energetic and at the present time attends one maths class, one English class, one study skills class and the PPA course. She goes to 2 separate branches of the Institute for these. She had dropped in and out of courses and selected her own curriculum with confidence. She would like to go on to college to take GCSE English and maths with the ambition of obtaining a CQSW or NNEB. She stated, however that, "if I don't feel like staying in child care for long I would like to advise people in the law.... I'd like to be in criminal law. If people get into trouble I'd like to help them out."

Angela tried to gain a place on the Access to Technology Course but was unsuccessful because of an administrative blunder. However, her determination carried her on.
"Because I didn't get in the course I want to,instead of staying home and twiddling my thumbs I come here (HRC) I go at Easter and get my name down again."
She was over 40 years old and did not anticipate being able to change her employment prospects but, as she succinctly put it, "Since I can't get something to put in my pocket, get something to put in my head".

ABE is not only the starting point for re-entry into education for many adults, but is also a service to which students return for further skills in response to demands at work or at College. Amina, Charlene, Hussein and John are good examples of this.

Amina was 15 years old when she arrived in this country from Aden. She later married and had two children and then separated from her husband. In 1980 she was unemployed and in order to further her education and employment chances, she successfully completed a study skills course at Hackney College in 1981. She then got a part-time job as an interpreter in Somali and Arabic.
She said "I could speak but couldn't write The course gave me confidence. I met Somali people in the Community Centre where I was a volunteer. They gave me a part-time job every morning for one year. "
She then got a full-time job with the Manpower Services Commission as an interpreter in 1985. She came to the Reading Centre to support the requirements of her work and is gaining in confidence as her writing is improving. Amina is sure that the support from the Reading Centre will lead to further education and in the short term would like to do another study skills course.
"In the longer term I want to do social work a CQSW with Age Concern. I need to build up my confidence to do this possibly next year.

Charlene came to the Reading Centre in 1982. She had attended a Preparatory course at City and East London College in 1981 which she had found at the Job Centre. She dropped out the course when she had a baby and and when she returned to education, she came to the Reading Centre. Charlene later

finished an office skills course with Project Fullemploy in 1988. It was a one year course. "I'd done various subjects, typing , word processing, English, Maths. It was very interesting. After.. I was looking for office work and I didn't get anywhere with it so I thought I'd try something new. I got a catering job from an agency, serving to the public. I enjoyed preparing the food and serving. Before I worked three months in a shoe shop. It was a temporary job."

Charlene's ambition is to get a full-time office job but so far she has not been able to do this However, she has written a book about her son, who is autistic and so has had other highly valued achievements.

Hussein was highly motivated and knew exactly what he wanted from the Institute. His tutor said that it was essential for Hussein to get a recognised qualification in order to go on and fulfil,"his considerable academic potential."
Hussein passed the equivalent of O level maths in Dacca Bangladesh about 10 years ago but this qualification was not recognised in the U.K. so he had decided to do his O level maths again.
The education system is at fault when students' previous qualifications are not fully acknowledged. Hussein was prepared to take his O levels in this country, but other students may not be able and the waste of human potential and resources is considerable. He enrolled in what was then called the 'Slightly Harder Maths' class now called 'Maths for study' and at the same time enrolled into the Hackney College 'O' level maths course at Ayrsome Road branch. His tutor commented that although he came to the AEI class regularly for support he didn't need much help

John, like Hussein, was also very highly motivated but initially so because he had become unemployed. His tutor, B., had become friendly with John and they had maintained this friendship. B. said, "John was trained and qualified as an Operating Department Assistant/Theatre technician [and] became unemployed following NHS cuts in 1986. He enrolled on the Maths for Study course and attended regularly making quick progress through O level work."
The demands of a 'Maths for Study' course did appear to attract students who could respond to this more formal syllabus in order to obtain quick results. The working methods and skills needed for a 'Maths for study' course are essential for students who need maths for exams and other courses. B. added that John's progress in the AEI gave him confidence to enrol in the Hackney College, Ayrsome Road O level English course in September 1987 where he achieved a good O level result.

Student use of 'Leisure' Classes

Many students use leisure classes instead of certificated courses to obtain the skills and resources they need. They use the skills to become self-employed or to supplement their income. At 57 years of age, Jane had successfully completed a one year course at Kingsway College in upholstery. She was able to get expenses to have her fares paid and "it made a big difference". In recognition of her skills and ability she was offered a place at the London College of Furniture but was unable to accept their offer owing to the fees (of £1,000) which were 1 year payable in advance. The college were rigid about this. She said, "I couldn't even pay for half a term at a time." She was resigned to the fact that "my husband is working [and] I couldn't get a grant at my age". He was also not keen for her to do this course. She now regularly attends the upholstery class in the AEI and intends to continue this class hoping it will lead to future self employment.

The routes shown in the biographies are misleading in aspects of non-vocational educational attendance. Information about courses students might be doing was not elicited in interviews or from the questionnaires, but it is known generally by tutors that sudents do attend many different non-vocational classes.

Drop-in and Drop-out of Adult Basic Education

This working sample of students depicts a very low drop out rate, as only two students dropped out of college courses. But ABE organisers feel that this would appear to be higher in annual statistics as ABE figures generally depict a high drop-in/drop-out rate. This could be perceived as a weakness, but it is in fact the only form of attendance possible for the many reasons already given. The possibility of being able to drop-in and drop-out is a strength. ABE organisers adjust to the variable requirements of classes, e.g. classes are double staffed where possible when numbers require them to be and this may happen half way through a year. Mechanistic or inflexible planning and budgeting is

inappropriate for ABE students.
The examples of Marion, Agnes and Elizabeth illustrate the way in which many students use this facility - as well as the case of Sandra already quoted who made use of the system to suit her changing needs.

Marion dropped out from her vocational course and then returned. This course was the Pre-school Playgroup Association course at the Adult Education Institute. It was flexible enough to allow Marion to return and repeat it.
"I started a P.P.A. course last year at Lauriston Road,.I went on holiday for five weeks and they told me not to come back in September but to come back in January".
Different sorts of flexibility are found on different courses, e.g. the Adult Foundation Course, unlike the P.P..A. course had no provision to repeat but had the flexibility for students to take a break. Modular courses would appear to cover all these needs. This is discussed further in the section on 'Outcomes.'

Agnes 's tutor told me that she had been attending literacy classes at a local branch of the Institute on and off since 1986. She knew that Agnes was interested in hairdressing but never seemed ambitious. "Just as she seemed to be making progress she would disappear for weeks. She never gave any reason for staying away and always seemed interested. "

Agnes explained that "When I first started I liked it a lot. My first daughter liked the creche. I went for a term and the following term I stop. I was expecting my second child. I went back (to the creche after class) and I think she's been crying all the time".
She had also found it difficult that inevitably there were changes of staffing. However, Agnes was honest with herself.
"I'd like to work. I'm a professional hairdresser, I haven't worked for 2-3 years because of the children. I would like to have my own business. Before I made the children an excuse. I don't want to deceive myself. I want to get going. It's always sad inside me. I always wish I'm better than what I am. It makes me cry a lot. This is what makes me carry on..That's my ambition."
The interview galvanised her into activity. When I telephoned her six weeks later she had been attending literacy classes again at HAEI.

Elizabeth had been a regular attender at literacy classers. She was also very active in her local pensioners' group. She had decided at 60+ that she wanted to 'slow down'. and devote all her energies to the pensioners' group and so had left her class.
For the last six months she has been attending an Open Learning Centre in Tower Hamlets.

Brigid found it intimidating to ask for help in a big class of 20 students, and dropped out in spite of advice from the Advice and Information service, and encouragement from tutors. This staff-student ratio is very unusual in ABE. Most classes have ratios recommended by ALBSU and the old ILEA Inspectorate of 6 - 1. When the new Community College is operational students will still need the patient care and friendly environment of Adult Basic Education Their needs will have to be carefully taken into account if they are not to be lost to continuing education.

Losing Touch

There were 2 students Janina and Mabel, who had attended AEI classes and enrolled on courses but the tutors did not know if they completed them. Janina was seen by her tutor as someone who " knew where she was going in life." She attended an AEI maths class once a week fairly regularly for over a year. Whilst giving an impression of a clear direction in her life she had not asked directly for advice from her class tutor about part time FE courses. He was unclear about what course she had enrolled on but thought she was "sticking at" a community care course.
He had lost touch with Janina
Mabel had been attending literacy/numeracy classes for 3 years. She had a clear ambition of wanting "to establish her own business in the catering field and heard about a course at Barking in 'Catering Technology'." She was told by N., the literacy/numeracy tutor, who wrote her a testimonial, that she could always come back to the class for individual help which she still needed because she had difficulty with the cake design elements of the course which involved a lot of geometry.
Many tutors are caring in their support of students and give up a great deal of time but N. was particularly so in helping Mabel on her catering course.
He said, "For some months I was visiting her home at 9 a.m. once a week going through work with her, leaving her to do it and bring it into Millfields (the branch of the AEI) when she was ready. This worked but was exhausting for both of us." He stressed, "this seems to me to be an important point - even

with all the support she could need, her week was becoming intolerable because of the demands of course work, support sessions and looking after her son."
N. has since lost touch with her as she does not continue to come to Millfields. He feels it is likely that she dropped out of the Catering Technology course because of the pressures and stopped coming to the class because she was embarrassed about it and felt she was letting down both N. and the other tutors.

SUPPORT

The issue of support is relevant to all students. The majority of students taking part in this research had no difficulties in enrolling on a college course at the first stage of their progression route. This indicates that students were well prepared for this stage. Thus the majority of students who completed the College Links course were first encouraged and supported by I..their tutor. This began with the process of introducing the idea of a college course.
Dulcie said, "It was the tutors at the Reading Centre who pushed and introduced it this way. It was good."
Sandra could also turn to her tutor for advice. "Before I go on a course, I have to make sure reading and writing is not a problem. I have to get confidence. I could ask my teacher for advice."

Most students need support of one kind or another at some time during their period in education. The issues which arose from this study and the kinds of support which were needed are outlined here.

The need for continuing literacy support

It was stressed many times by the students that there was literacy support on College Links with all the component parts of the curriculum. This support came specifically from the tutors that the students knew and had worked with at the Reading Centre. Even though the structure of the learning had changed, the familiarity of the tutors sustained support. It is a reflection of the supportive nature of the student body that they also learned from each other. It was inevitable so as most of them came simultaneously from the College Links course with a solid background of shared years of learning experience at the Reading Centre classes. It was also an opportunity to meet advanced students from different backgrounds in an alternative learning context.
Marion said, We meet other people and they so friendly, sometime they help"
Pearl did not feel she had had the same experience. She came to the College Links course one -term Summer course as other students from the Reading Centre were completing the Adult Foundation Year, and she was in a different group from most of her friends.
She said,"I didn't get support. I feel I was the odd one out. You mixing a long time before me. You get used to it. I come after ,that's why I feel (unconfident) If they ask you to do something and they expect you to do it in a minute.If you can't do it you will feel a bit out. You could ask but some time you get the feeling that you should do it without asking. They (Angela and Cheriese) can do it and they can get on with it. If I could do it I would just get on with it like them but I don't know what to bloody do."

However, the practical side of the course appealed to everyone and here Pearl could relax, but still she did not finish the College Links course as she felt she was not experienced enough to do college work. She was the only one who dropped out, and it may be that the others found support in belonging to the group that gave them the encouragement to finish the course.

Alternative Support

Whereas some students come to ABE classes to obtain support for demands at work or other courses, some, like Beverley, are prepared to pay for tuition. Her tutor said she had gone to a private language school to try and improve her English and that it helped her reading but not her writing. When she couldn't afford to carry on with it she came back to the Reading Centre and is repeating College Links for Adults in order to progress. Perhaps the reason that Beverley opted for private tuition was that she felt she might be getting good 'value for money' and that this way her husband supported her efforts.

Maths in the Curriculum

Maths is a problematic area, as the students at Hackney Reading Centre demonstrate. All the students referred specifically to maths when asked about the support they felt they most needed. Even though the college course content was varied, Angela was very clear why she was attending college.

"When we went there, we went for the reading and the maths"
Cheriese said "It was the maths.. that maths.. the maths is a terrible thing."
Angela added, "Fractions, there are six of us in the class and he's going round and says to me do it this way, and by number three I've forgotten what he says. I have to call him again. I was very embarrassed but he says not to worry. But I still got problems with fractions but my younger son helps. I don't have to do anything like to do with fractions.
Written calculations were new for Cheriese, "Well my way of saying just check it up and add it up, it's something different to write it.It's hard to add it up, hard.. but I'm determined to know it that way".
Both Angela and Cheriese are women over 50 years old. They had no formal maths schooling and relied on mental calculations. To learn new skills and methods in mathematics was hard enough, but to change mental arithmetic methods of a lifetime into written calculations must have been arduous.

There appear to be several reasons for these problems
(1) While many numeracy students use numbers with great ease, many more are blocked by 'maths anxiety'. This is a problem recognised by teachers throughout the education system, and attributed to methods of teaching which inhibit understanding and cause panic.
(2) There are many older students who have not received any maths schooling. They have acquired great mental agility but, like Cheriese and Angela, have to make a big leap in learning to calculate on paper.
(3) It is widely recognised that for women students there is, at least in this country, a general lack of encouragement in maths at school which is difficult to overcome.
(4) Many students gain their maths experience or learning in another country or culture. This may be demonstrated by using different methods of calculation or setting things out in an alternative way. A problem could be caused by tutors not recognising the students' own methods of work.
(5) While the literacy process is also about valuing students' opinions, ideas, culture and background, in maths it can be seen to be a question of being right or wrong and learning 'correct' methods of calculation.

ABE practitioners try to deal with these issues explicitly by inviting students to talk and write about their early experience of maths. In terms of teaching methods, students are encouraged to develop an active approach to maths as part of life rather than a helpless fear of 'sums' in the abstract. In FE it may be that the restrictions imposed by a more rigid syllabus make it difficult to deal with the real problems of understanding and confidence that nonetheless refuse to go away. It is common for students on college courses to go back to ABE for help with their coursework. For the ABE tutor this can mean teaching higher level maths effectively whilst being paid at the lower rate deemed appropriate for basic education, despite the highly developed teaching methods and skills of ABE.

Education Advice

Advice from specialised adult advice workers and from tutors within institutions can be crucial to students in ABE.

Virgilia, in particular, benefitted from the Open Day at Hackney College. She had regularly attended a Hackney AEI basic maths class once a week for a year. Her ex-tutor stated she had enrolled at Hackney College after taking part in an Open day jointly organised by Hackney College and AEI staff and students at KeltanHouse, Hackney College. The aim of the Open day was to give Hackney AEI students an opportunity to see what was involved FE work. Subsequently she began a Return to Study course with an option in Business Studies. Her tutor said that she was very motivated towards this option, especially when she had gained experience in word processing and confidence in maths and realised the Hackney College course was not so daunting." After her Hackney College course began in September '88 she could no longer attend AEI classes. Her tutor continued, "At the next open day she was able to say, as a HC student, to the AEI students that she was finding it immensely useful in terms of educational development."

Access for students with disabilities

The journey to the College at Jubilee Street and Raines presented Dulcie with some difficulty. She has a disability that makes walking laborious and climbing stairs problematic. She needs help because the buildings are not adapted for people with disabilities. The support available for access up the mountain of stairs, especially the top flight, to the Reading Centre was well established. Dulcie was a familiar figure with her shopping

trolley when she came to Centerprise and a quick telephone call to the Reading Centre brought someone down to help her up the stairs. She was dependent on this help even though the procedure was straightforward and she did not have to ask for it. It would be better still to have proper disabled access.*
It is indicative of her resolution that she was prepared to pay for a taxi to take her to the part of the College Links course that was at Jubilee Street.
"I wanted to prove for myself it was too much, not have someone telling me. (but) I would have used Dial-a -ride if I'd done another term"
It was for financial reasons that she was finally unable to carry on taking a taxi.
At Raines she could not be seen by schoolkeepers at the bottom the the outside steps when she arrived and she had to ask someone to obtain their help. It says something about Dulcie's determination that she finished the College Links course despite these problems.

*Centerprise is situated in an old Victorian building and has been trying for a number of years to raise funds for a lift. It has not yet raised the requisite amount.

UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

There were two students who went on to University, Isobel via Hackney AEI and Debbie from Hackney Reading Centre. Although Debbie and Isobel had different cultural backgrounds and starting points in ABE, both were motivated and wanted to move on. Initially Debbie's aspirations were not set as high as University, but they changed and she proceeded. These students are quite different from those who want to learn generally as, "a lifetime thing". Their own motivation, and academic ability backed by support of tutors,and other support from the educational system enabled these students to move on. This has implications for the tutors in ABE who work in mixed ability classes. Switching roles and adjusting to different work levels to continuously meet the needs of all students, demands sensitivity and communication skills of the tutor.
There are also implications for university and polytechnic departments who are now recruiting more mature students, and who are beginning to find that they will have to respond to their needs for continuing support, both for study and on a personal level. Non-traditional students in Higher Education, particularly women with children, have specific needs, that some institutions are beginning to recognise. This report does not have a remit to exhaustively research this area,and on a sample of two students, does not attempt to make general conclusions, but many of the problems facing mature students are exemplified by the histories of Debbie and Isobel.They had very different experiences, in that one was not able to finish her degree course and the other is expecting to complete. The questions which arise from their experiences are similar to those of other students in this report - what factors affect their success and what level of support is needed to enable them to move on, or to make their own choices about their education.

Background

Isobel is 30 years old and single. She was born in Portugal and had an academic background, completing her education up to preparation for University in Portugal. She was seriously injured in a car accident, which "stopped everything", and she "couldn't devote time to education". Isobel could speak and read English and came to the U.K. in 1980. She attended a literacy class at Chelmer Rd branch of HAEI briefly, then went on to an Access course at City and East London College From there she was offered a place at Goldsmiths College on a 3 year full time degree course in Anthropology and Psychology. She is now in her second year.
Debbie left school age 15 with no qualifications but highly motivated to learn. A few years later she went to Hackney Reading Centre to build up her confidence to take O' levels. She progressed to a Fresh Start course at HAEI and then took her 0 levels. From there she went onto an Access course at Hackney College. She then gained a place on a full-time three year B.A. degree course in Cultural Studies at North East London Polytechnic. She dropped out after a year and has been doing temporary administrative work at Islington Community Employment Project. She wants a full time job when this finishes.
Debbie is a single parent age 30 years with a five year old daughter. Her marriage broke down while in her first year at University.

For both Debbie and Isobel age is a positive factor in their progress. The education system provides generously for this age group, there are many Access courses for women

returners. There are also numerous students with similar backgrounds, particularly to Debbie, i.e. black, working class, single parents who support each other both practically and emotionally on a course. Creche provision is also crucial and Debbie was able to attend her Fresh Start course because Lauriston branch of the AEI had a creche. When she moved on to her Access course there were limited creche places. Debbie could only attend because she was resourceful enough to set up her own nursery provision with other people. She was fortunate in her nursery place because, while Access courses have limited childcare placements, Universities offer fewer places still.

Finance

The question of finance is crucial. Debbie did not get a grant to do her O' levels. She was registered unemployed and was therefore eligible for the concessionary fee of £1.00*. The Access course for Cultural studies was a 21 hour course, which meant that students could study for a maximum of 21 hours a week without losing benefits.**

Debbie could not have gone to university without a grant but it was not enough to live on for her and her daughter and she had to supplement it with various part-time jobs. Financial problems arose when she failed one of her papers in the exam at the end of the first year and needed a grant to resit. Her tutors offered to help her apply for one, but her fear of not getting a grant underpinned Debbie's decision not to return to resit her first year.

Isobel had only herself to support and she did not mention finance as a problem in her experience. She had received a grant for her City Lit full-time course and for her course at Goldsmiths. Obtaining a grant had not presented many difficulties. She commented, "It was the easiest bit."

Motivation and Educational Advice

Debbie and Isobel had always been independent learners when they were in ABE and had always had a clear sense of direction. Isobel was told by a tutor about Access to Higher Education at a time on her ABE course when it was appropriate for her.

Debbie was also a motivated and capable student who progressed quickly. She was encouraged by tutors to move on from Fresh Start to an Access course and then to University. But her history raises some of the dilemmas and problems faced by students who come into ABE and progress. Whilst it is perfectly reasonable to be encouraged by tutors, friends and family to move on and 'shift the goalposts', Debbie was adamant that the step from Access course to University was not of her own motivation and making.
"I still felt that I wasn't ready but I suppose in a sense I was led to believe that doing a degree wasn't as difficult as it was made out to be and with that in mind and thinking it may be like the Access course then I could cope, but it was nothing like the Access course. The Access course was like doing O' levels in comparison so it was a major difference and that was a real kind of shock to the system and I just couldn't handle it."

Debbie felt incorrectly advised. In spite of the best intentions of all, the education system did not serve her well, as she is left without the University qualification that she had been led to expect, and finds herself without qualifications in poorly paid work. However, she is still highly motivated and says,"At some stage, if I can build up my confidence I would actually like to do a degree.

*Since the abolition of the ILEA concessionary fees have risen to £15.00 in most boroughs.

**Since then the rules have been changed and students who are registered unemployed, although they may still study under the 21 hour rule, now have to be prepared to drop their courses if paid employment becomes available. They also have to show that they are actively seeking work.
See *The Struggle to Study* (published by the joint Open College Networks of London in 1991 for a fuller report of the financial position of mature students

The University Experience

Isobel was having difficulty in coming to terms with the learning experience of her University course.

"The Lecturer seems far away. You are expected to deal with information but it's more what 'x' said. It's to teach you how to think and then get a job... You are treated as a child but expected to behave as an adult."
She was also struggling with the skills of writing but appeared to be succeeding. It was in her personal expectations of self-development through the education system that Isobel expressed disappointment.

"Because things happen in your life... when you waited so long to do something.. to do a course, I want to probe, poke and find out things. You can't deviate from the course. There's too much to do. There's no time to discuss. If you haven't got the skills you fall behind."
She felt let down "There's no sharing of ideas. It's not rich. It's all quantity,no discussion, it feels distant." She was clear in her understanding though, that, "You've got to fulfil the role of the student," and struggled to do it.

Study Skills

There are different kinds of support required on courses. Support for study skills is needed and personal support from tutors and students and home. Both Debbie and Isobel felt they lacked study skills, particularly in essay writing. When they arrived at University they felt it was too late to ask for help.

Debbie was succinct. "If you are reading a text you'd better be looking for certain things like where's this person coming from, what do they mean, what's their line of argument? I didn't have those skills and that became a real major problem when I started doing the degree."

Isobel stated that, "surrounded by professors you feel very threatened" to seek support. She was told in a forthright manner by one of her tutors, "I am here to teach you psychology not here to teach you essays. You have to teach yourself."

Even though there was a counsellor for skills support, "he was overbooked".
If there is any sure way to maintain a hierarchy in learning, it is to take away a support structure and let students find their own means of delivering what is required.

Personal counselling and support at University

Neither Debbie nor Isobel had practical study skills support, but Isobel felt she had good counselling and there was one tutor she could talk to about her difficulties. Whilst appreciating this emotional support from one tutor, Isobel had a perceptive view on others, "Tutors are very ready to hear your private problems. There is some sort of voyeurism there. If it's simple skills, it's different because it's assumed you have certain skills. It's embarrassing to ask. At the end of the day you're on your own."

Although Debbie felt unsupported, "There are some students who just need more help than others and I think I was one of those that needed more support at that time," she could go back to see her Reading Centre tutors for emotional and practical support.

Home support

When Isobel was asked about support at home, she tersely replied "none", but added that neither were there any great pressures. "I haven't got any support but my time is my own. I haven't got dependents. I haven't got pressures of marriage or boy-friends not wanting you to do it." In this way she could concentrate all her energies on her own needs.

Debbie, on the other hand, was under an intolerable pressure at home and besides having financial problems and needing study skills support, the demands of home must have exacerbated her feelings of inadequacy. She was faced with the prospect of re-sitting the first year if she was unable to resit the paper which meant asking for an extra year's grant. At the same time her relationship with her husband was breaking down and she had to look for alternative accommodation in the same area so that her child could be near her father to maintain their relationship.
The burden fell on Debbie to sort out this situation,
"so I approached my housing association and got them to draw up a new policy that they (should) rehouse married couples separately. All these things were happening and I got more and more depressed with what was going on at home and I just couldn't work the two together plus I was doing the community job at Centerprise. There seemed to be quite a bit and then fitting in childcare with that and I found it, I think, a bit too much in the end and I just decided not to do the degree any more."

All these factors, together, contributed to Debbie dropping out of University.

Aspects of Success

Isobel seemed to be achieving her goals and finishing her degree. She had few pressures and some emotional support to enable her to achieve this. Although disappointed in thinking that the course would advance her personal development to a greater extent, she was reflective about how the course had affected some change in her.

"I developed from the point of view of developing my needs. It's useful because it gives me insight into what I want to do. It helped me to select and stop and think."

Debbie maintains her long-term goal and wants to return to University after gaining "vocational work training.

In the past she has also had a significant success when writing an essay that she was pleased about.drawing on her own knowledge of Hackney Paradoxically, she wrote it whilst she was on the Access course about which she was so critical.
"I managed to do an essay and I took it in and the response to the essay was very good and that was the only time I was happy about anything on any of the courses.

A tutor's warm appraisal would have been important in giving credibility to that personal experience as well as developing academic confidence in the skills of essay writing.Verna Rosen comments on this factor of what students give of themselves and how it is recognised, when considering how students achieve success. (Beyond Higher Education by Verna Rosen. ALFA pp99).

> **"No longer children, they have matured and developed life skills. A point that many have made in different ways is that there was an existence for them before further education and that they had gained experience and knowledge from the way that they had handled their lives, even though that knowledge had not been couched in academic terms. They gained a great deal from having that experience acknowledged by staff on the courses. Where itwas not valued they felt diminished and less capable of giving.**

In another study (*Learning the Hard Way*, edited by Jo Campling, MacMillan Education 1989 pp680 she points out that:

> **"The reality of most women's lives under the present system handicaps us before we start. We have to bear the main responsibility ofdomestic and childcare labour, regardless of whether we are studying or not. We also spend vast amounts of energy doing the emotional and caring labour that is required, both in family life and increasingly in the wider community. We can't automatically rely on the kind of emotional and practi cal support for our own studies that we would expect to receive if we were men."**

This sectioOn outlines some of the factors which made progress possible, and some suggestions for changes which would further enable students to progress. These are mainly directed at the administration of courses and of the organisers of provision.

Organisation of Provision

Hackney Reading Centre provision takes place in a single centre. The tutor/organiser has the ability to respond to students' needs formally and informally. The power of the dual role of the Organiser's post, (teaching and management) is used to students' advantage. The organiser could respond directly to the needs of those students who were going to the Adult Foundation Course . By being able to fund and set up the College Links course, and teach on it, the organiser was able to provide explicit structural support and personal reassurance through her familiarity with and knowledge of the students.

The AEI functions differently. It is a large organisation with provision spread over several sites. AEI tutors, particularly part-time tutors can be very responsive to students' needs informally within the class, but obviously can do litle more than refer the student elsewhere to a more appropriate class if necessary.
The Access and Return to Learning Dept does respond to students' needs by opening classes such as Reading and Writing with Confidence, or study skills classes to support students on college courses. However these other classes might well be in different branches of HAEI which may make it difficult for students who need it directly to attend The familiarity of the tutor at HRC in the College Links Course is inevitably not present at the AEI because of the nature of the size and structure of the Institute.

The implications of this for the Community College is that it should be able to provide direct and more immediate links between courses of a specific nature . Tutors could then become familiar with teaching in different classes and on different types of education courses with varying styles. This could provide a reassuring personal link as well as structured educational support in established settings.

Education advice

The role of education advice and guidance for students is an important one at all levels. This can take the form of informal counselling, by tutors, as described above, or through colleges organising special events.

Of the 27 students studied, 20 went to college. The implications are that the courses seemed appropriate and that ABE gives students the skills they need. Personal contact is very important to facilitate this progression e.g. Open Days, outreach work by the colleges and ABE staff teaching on college courses, enable students to decide about suitable classes and progression routes.

There is also a valuable Advice and Information service within the Access Department of the AEI. This system needs to be geared so that the informal response of tutors to students' needs is shared more widely. This could be done via the AEI Educational Advice and Counselling service and the Advice Service within other departments of the AEI so that individual tutor's initiatives are not 'lost' and structural changes can take place to respond to student needs. This initiative has already begun with a workshop to discuss possible progression routes for students, with tutors from the Access & Return to Learning Department and tutors from the department of English for Speakers of Other Languages. The workshop was also intended to give tutors a chance to look at the broad range of progression offered by outside agencies. Students use tutors for advice but no one mentioned the Hackney Educational Advice Service. This is a valuable service. It might be more valuable if more outreach work could be done so students and tutors could use it to extend their information and choices.

Flexibility of Provision : The need for modularisation and accreditation of courses.

Eleven students returned from College to ABE mainly because there was no other suitable course. Ten out of these eleven returned to Hackney Reading Centre from College Links/ Adult Foundation Course. Some, like Ida, wanted to repeat the Adult Foundation Course and could not. She said, "I need to learn more". Others, such as Cheriese and Angela, could not get on to another course of their choice. Students who had completed the Adult Foundation Course returned to the Reading Centre because they could not repeat the course or find another one to suit them. If there was a modular course structure, students could have repeated the course and felt more confident about moving on if they had wished to do so

There is a difference between dropping out of ABE and Further or Higher Education. Whilst Brigid had dropped out of ABE, she would be able to come back whenever she wished, because of its flexible structure. There is no fixed starting or finishing point. Elizabeth had dropped out of her ABE class to participate more actively in her pensioners group. In attending the Open Learning Centre she had evidently found a learning structure whose 'drop in' nature suited her perfectly. Long term commitment to attending ABE classes with multiple breaks is not unusual.
Charlene dropped out of her Preparatory course at City and East London College because she had a baby and then returned to the Reading Centre classes. Since then, the pressures of life have meant that she has dropped out of the Reading Centre and came back several times.

Margaret dropped out of study skills classes for the same reason and returned to her job.

Pearl dropped out of her College Links course because the more formal College style of teaching did not suit her. She kept up her classes at HRC and continues to attend there regularly.

The flexible nature of ABE appears to fulfil the needs of students. Open Learning Centres complement this. To maintain this flexibility, College courses need to be modularised so that students also have the maximum amount of choices to suit their needs. Further to this, are the implications that time spent on a course has no value if a student drops out. If there was accreditation for modularised courses, students would have concrete value for their time spent which would provide greater options at any time in the future. Care would have to be taken and modularisation has to be introduced sensitively in ABE in order that group dynamics are not destroyed by a sense of competition in the classroom. The system already applies in other countries e.g. Australia, Italy and United States and is rapidly developing in this country through Open Networks such as LOCF and ALFA. (See appendix for notes on LOCF accreditation and ALFA validation schemes)

Learning at Your Own Speed.

There is a qualitative difference between students who may learn slowly and those who learn more quickly. To accommodate this, there is a need to change courses to a modular structure and also change the teaching style to suit both students from ABE classes and more advanced students. Whilst the students who completed the College Links and Adult Foundation Course were rightly proud of themselves, it is worth noting that the organiser/tutor's perception of their success was that there should also have been the potential to continue with another course if they wished, not to return to the Reading Centre. (See What is Success).

Higher Education

The transition from Further Education to Higher Education is not always smooth. particularly for mature students. The experiences of Debbie and Isobel, when one dropped out and the other went on to finish her degree nevertheless showed that in both cases there was a need for continuing support during the degree courses. Debbie would have benefitted from further study skills help, as well as more sympathetic counselling. A modular system would have meant that the one year she completed could have been accredited and made a return to the course more likely. . Isabel found the experience of studying a disappointing one, and this raises other issues not within the scope of this project, but her sense of isolation must have contributed to it.

Fees: A Financial Penalty

Jane was prevented from taking her place at College by fees, payable a year in advance. She did not get a discretionary grant.. Her age 50+ may have been against her. One other student, John, did not take up his place at College, also for financial reasons. With the abolition of grants and the introduction of the Student Loan Scheme, many students, particularly older ones, may be penalised from taking up placements on courses they have been offered. Furthermore, it is important to consider the hidden numbers of students who do not even apply for courses knowing money will be a problem.

Age as A Factor in Educational Choice

The education routes for students of 20-30 years is the most complex because there were 16 students in this age group and there were more easily available educational routes to choose from. Older students, those over 50 years, found it difficult to find courses of their choice. Cheriese was interested in doing a catering course.

"There was none there (no further courses), nothing to my age. Once you start you want to carry on, but the age bracket, it makes a lot of difference. 60, 70, 80, 90, as long as you start... It's like a man drilling a place and a little water coming but when you drill deep, then it pour up, it spread, you want to spread..."

The education system appears to reward younger students with choices, possibly with a view to foreseeing a return for this investment, both in terms of employment and educational advancement, rather than rewarding students wishing to learn for its own sake. How students view these choices and the success they achieve is open to broad interpretation.

What Is Success?

When one is looking at progress, one inevitably comes to the notion of success. It raises several questions. At what point in the progression route is it possible to see success? How do you evaluate what is successful in this progression and perhaps,most important of all, who evaluates it ? What do students use as a yardstick for evaluation? It appears that there are specific tasks or criteria against which students measure themselves in order to evaluate their progression. Furthermore, students need to have control of this process and be in control of the decision about whether it is successful. This can mean different things to different students, e.g. for Cheriese, "What you miss in your past you come and find in here."

Isobel was more critical of her achievement "I've been waiting so long and then it's a cold shower."

Tutors' views encompass two different ways of perceiving success. The first is setting a student's success against concrete objectives, e.g. an exam or obtaining a place on a course. The second is enabling the process of developing confidence through the achievements of every day life For Angela, progression means both, i.e. being treated with respect at College

as an independent learner, "They (College tutors) treat us like adults and they treat us with respect and they help you to do things." Success also means being able to use her skills functionally in everyday life.
She says, "If something happens in a catalogue.... I pick up my pen and write a letter and then I go through it, look through my dictionary if it's spelt alright. It gives me confidence about everyday things...I've just grown up in the last three years."

The Shape of Progress

Progression is not always linear. Students do not necessarily start in one class and progress smoothly to another. Some jump directly into more formally organised advanced classes if that's what they need and some might never progress past general literacy classes. They would not be interested in pursuing that route. They may want to move to alternative classes for a variety of reasons. People should have choices; moving sideways, staying put or progressing forwards. The problem is when there is nowhere to go. Making the right choices needs luck and determination. Students like Sandra take full advantage of the flexibility of ABE classes. She can repeat the vocational PPA course to suit her needs and also the Study Skills course at Hackney college. Students at HRC are repeating the College Links course for the second time this summer term 1990. They have more competence and more confidence. The opportunity to repeat the College Links course will enable students to maintain and develop their study skills.

Returning to Hackney Reading Centre

Students return to Hackney Reading Centre to a comfortable familiar place to people they know. They can pop in. The core of a Moving On class started with those students who had been to college and new students joined the group who were too advanced for general literacy classes. Students come from the Institute and also leave to go to the Institute if they wish. Some students attend Hackney Reading Centre and Hackney Adult Education Institute concurrently. Study skills are a component part of the Moving On Class. Most people need these skills, even those going to University. Support, both personal and practical, is always needed at whatever level. Students who have been right through the education system come back to the support they know exists for them at the Reading Centre. There may be no other options for those students. Some students define their own vocational goals to which the Reading Centre responds and gives the support they need. Angela is successful in her own terms. She has clear objectives. "I would be really proud if I could finish my course and make my patterns myself because I can make things but I can't do patterns myself. If I could earn a crust it would be fine but it would be alright for me if you come to me and said make a dress, then I can sketch it out (and) cut a pattern in your size. I don't want to keep on shopping for patterns because they're expensive."
As she has said, reaching this point has been a question of building up her confidence and then developing her skills through college and further increasing her confidence. It is necessary to link closely all these needs. People come back and forth dropping in and out. Support is needed at both ends of the educational hierarchy. The flexibility of these routes, however, does not necessarily mean success.

Student success or failure?

The students who finished the College Links and Adult Foundation Course came back to HRC because there was nowhere else to go. The tutor stated, "most of the students have their own goals. Angela wanted to do dressmaking, Cheriese catering, Marion the PPA. If they were not ready, there should have been a course after the AFC to prepare them. They needed to move on in small steps and to go back to go forward again was not what they really needed. The education system didn't provide this next step. She continued, "the fact that students are back isn't a success or a failure on their part but on the part of the educational system. It didn't provide them with somewhere to go (i.e. an opportunity to repeat the Adult Foundation Course or an alternative course), so in their own terms they were successful. For those students who completed the Adult Foundation Course it is positive that they learned from the course and grew more independent."She concluded, "students like Debbie are not necessarily more successful because they progress further. She started at a further point and it was the obvious route for her to go. She has learned that she now needs more work experience and skills."

Adult Basic Education

There is a need to be aware of these different aspects of success in working with students.

enjoys learning in a class where she can be expressive and feel supported with this style, may be wrong for Debbie who would like a more formal structured style of learning and to feel equally supported in learning this way. "I didn't pick up the skills I would have needed for the degree - essay writing skills, proper essay writing skills, proper discipline and I think it needs to be like school, if you like, where you're doing your three hours. It's got to be disciplined, it's not nice, it's going to be boring most probably. You need it, you just need it."
If these means are not provided neither student will progress.

Conclusions

These different perspectives of progression and success can present the tutor with a dilemma. In recognising a student's needs when they return to Basic Education a decision has to be taken, either not to correct students too much and make room for personal expression or to push people to move through the education system. Some students need both at different times. It is difficult for tutor and student to know what is needed. What is important is to let the student progress at their own pace and ensure that this progression is in small steps and is acknowledged and confirmed each time assessment is made.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Finance

It is extremely important that the planned Community College maintains the flexible nature of Adult Basic Education provision. This flexibility allows students to make choices about what classes they attend and when and is part of the strength of ABE. This provision includes study skills classes which are for students who want to move on and for students who have moved on but come back for support.

It should be acknowledged that ABE students use non-core or non-vocational classes if they are unable to do a vocational course. There is a need to retain classes of this type in order for students to have broad options.

Modular courses

More modularised and accredited courses are needed. This is in order to acknowledge and give value to the nature of provision that suits ABE students. Accredited courses give value to time spent on a course, even when a student has had to drop out. The Open College Network, e.g. through LOCF (London Open College Federation) now offers accreditation of learning on many adult and further education courses. These credits are accumulated in a Credit Record which can be used to support applications for further study, jobs or training. Support for this system is essential in adult education now to ensure students progression.

Outreach Work by Colleges

The links between colleges and ABE must be developed and strengthened. More Open Days and personal visits by education workers in ABE and FE clearly facilitate progression for students. There is a need for tutors to meet together and to form links with outside agencies such as Hackney Educational Advice Service so that professional links can be established between tutors. This would facilitate the sharing of knowledge about courses and improve advice about student routes. Continuity in staffing would enable these links to be continued and strengthened in the Community College.

Skills Support

More Study Skills support is needed at University level It is difficult for student to ask for help and it should be part of the structure of courses.

Creches

There is a need for more creche places to be made available so that students are not disqualified from taking up a place.

Access & Disability

Students such as Dulcie who are disabled have a right to independent lives, and should not be penalised, either by financial reasons or by lack of access to education. Buildings should have full access so that students' independence can be maintained. Support structures need to be introduced using clear referrals, so that tutors, administrative staff and caretaking staff are informed beforehand of a student's needs. In this way students can gain access to classrooms and all facilities. It is hoped that new Community Colleges will make a commitment to providing these by targetting resources and actively fund-raising..

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR STUDENTS

The students I had to work with were classified as those ready to move on and those who had already progressed. It was necessary to find out if those identified as ready to move on had done so and what had facilitated this. If they hadn't, what had been the stumbling blocks. For those who had completed courses it was necessary to find out what they had done and what changes the course had made to their lives.
The questions could be combined on one questionnaire. Not all students would answer all questions.

ALFA RESEARCH - Student Questionnaire

1. If you thought about doing a college course, how did you decide which course to go on? What help did you get in making your choice?

2. If you thought about going on a course but didn't do so, why was this?

3. How useful did you find your course? Did it help you go on to further education? Did it help you to get a job?

4. If you didn't look for further training or education or another job, why was this?

5. What are you doing now?

6. If you started a course but didn't finish it, why was this so?

7. Are you thinking about doing another course? Which one?

8. What ambitions do you have for the future?

I had also devised a multiple choice questionnaire thinking that it might be easier to categorize the answers and this could clearly provide insights for evaluation e.g. It is recognised that there are various stages which students go through before they even begin a course. Enrolment is one of them. The questions were designed to elicit information about this.
After discussions with part-time tutors, however, it was felt that as I hoped to interview most students, open ended questions would make me more approachable, but it was useful to retain the multiple choice questionnaire as a prompt sheet for asking questions.

STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRES

PROMPTS FOR QUESTIONS AND POSSIBLE CATEGORIES FOR EVALUATION

. Who gave you advice?	course tutor own idea friends other tutors outside agencies
1.Did the advisor/ friend give you additional help?	
Did they	make an appointment give you a map & direction give you the name of the course tutor give you lots of details of the course
Did you successfully enrol?	
2.i If you didn't successfully enrol, was this because	happy where I am present job child care another job next course too far course not what you wanted too expensive
2.ii ..or at enrolment stage	couldn't find place rang but couldn't get through too late, missed date rang but person on phone wasn't helpful
3. Which course did you enrol on?	Title of the course.... Name of Institute Polytechnic/College
How long was the course -	1 term/1 year/2 years/years
Was the course part time	2-12 hours part time 12-21 hours full time
3. Did the course give you confidence?	Did you feel it changed you?
3.ii Were you supported on the course by	good course tutors other students support classes (extra help with spelling writing etc.)

good child care
arrangements
easy travel
support at home
other agencies

3 iii What happened when you finished the course?
Did you

keep your job?
get a different job?
if so what job?
enrol on a different course
if so, what course?
return to previous class?

3.iv Did you make this decision

by self
or help from
course tutors
other students
other tutors
friends
family
other agencies

3.v Who gave you advice for further training?

college tutor
course tutor
other tutors on course
previous tutors
friend
outside agency

3.vi If you looked for work, where did you look?

job centre
job club
factories
friend
sign in shop

4. If you didn't go on to further education or training was this because

time
another job
course cost too much
travel difficulties
felt you'd done enough
wasn't another course to go on

5. Did you decide to leave after

1 week
1 month
3 months
1 year

Did you leave because

work too difficult
work too easy
course not what you wanted
course not what you expected
child care problems
travel difficulties
awkward time
family difficulties
problem with teachers
other students

Tutor questionnaire

The 7 tutors who had identified the students completed a questionnaire. The AEI tutors had many years of teachingexperience and worked substantial hours in the Institute. At HRC the organiser/tutor was full time. There was regular contact through internal meetings and borough links between tutors. The fact that tutors were so well aware of their students' progress routes, often having initiated them, demonstrates how useful these links are.
The tutor questionnaire was particularly important as this was my only source of information on 12 students.
This questionnaire was based on the same questions that the students had been asked in order to define if there was a link between tutors' expectations of their students and what actuallyhappened to them..

TUTOR QUESTIONNAIRE ALFA RESEARCH

1 .How do you believe your student decided which course to go on and what help did s/he get?

2. If s/he thought about going on a course but didn't do so, why was this?

3. How useful do you think s/he found his/her course in terms of educational development or jobs?

4.What is s/he doing now?

5.If s/he started a course and failed to finish it, why do you believe this was so?

6. Is s/he thinking about doing a further course?

7. What ambitions do you believe s/he has for the future.

I then charted the students' route via interviews and questionnaires. This was cross referenced with tutors' questionnaires. No startling differences emerged.

A Note on Filling in questionnaires

Students found it laborious to fill in a questionnaire. It was after all a piece of writing and could be quite extensive and it was important to the student to have this acknowledged. The student's wish to write Standard English with correct spellings sometimes slowed down the interview and the process of writing threatened to overwhelm the interview's objectives.
The tape recorder, at first intrusive, was vital support for me in this, so as not to become dependent on a lengthy process of filling in questionnaires. By the end of the interviews the tape recorder was not a problem.

THE OPEN COLLEGE NETWORKS AND THE LONDON OPEN COLLEGE FEDERATION

Open College Networks (OCNs)

An OCN consists of the educational organizations within a local area which have come together as a formally organized body to widen access for adults, and to improve and extend education and training opportunities, through collaborative working. There are currently four OCNs in inner London, each covering two, three or four boroughs; all providers of adult and further education are represented, together with polytechnics, universities, education advice services, the careers services and voluntary and community organizations.

London Open College Federation (LOCF)

LOCF is a federation of the four OCNs, who have joined together to deliver their accreditation and validation system, and those other activities which have a London-wide rather than a local emphasis

Access Validation

Access validation is a process by which Access to Higher Education (HE) courses are formally recognized. A national framework for this has been recently established by the Council for National Academic Awards (CNAA), whereby local agencies consider the suitability of Access courses submitted for validation. Courses successful in their submissions will then be "kitemarked" by the CNAA and have national currency. It is expected that the four OCNs will act as local agencies in the London area.

Accreditation

Accreditation is a process by which a programme of learning is formally recognized, and through which learners can be awarded credits for their achievements. As credits may be gained at four levels, from basic education to preparation for HE, the Open College system provides a coherent framework for the adult curriculum, enhancing access and provision. Students on validated Access courses will be automatically eligible to gain LOCF credits in this way.
Further information on Return to Learning and other courses for adults can be obtained from:

LOCF (London Open College Federation)
The Marlborough Building,
383 Holloway Road,
London, N7 0RN
01-700 1267

ALFA (The North and East London Open College Network)
The Marlborough Building,
383 Holloway Road,
London, N7 0RN
01-607 9393